

Acknowledgements Table of Contents

EDITOR: Robert J. E. Simpson

robert@harrorunlimited.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR: David L. Rattigan

david@horrorunlimited.com

PUBLISHER: Dima Ballin, Horror Unlimited

dima@horrorunlimited.com

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING: Greg Petaludis

greg@horrorunlimited.com

DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Dima Ballin, Winning Edge, Inc.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Michael Bertini

MichaelBertini@HorrorUnlimited.com



CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Adrian Smith, Sarah Crowther, Daniel Bird, Peter Hames, Devin Whitman, Joan Eyles Johnson, Drew Beard, David Kleiler, Robyn Talbot, David L Rattigan, Robert J.E. Simpson. All text © 2011 to the individual authors.

IMAGES ARE COURTESY OF, AND/OR @ OF

Carsten Baiersdörfer, Jed Slast, Chris Barwick, Jan Bernard, Brian Ewing, Columbia Pictures, Fox Searchlight Pictures, Karoprokat, BFI, Amour Fou Filmproduktion, The Horror Unlimited Collection.

HORROR UNLIMITED MARKETING DIVISION

150-50 Coolidge Avenue Briarwood NY 11432-1622 USA

Phone: (718) 658-5020

Website: www.HorrorUnlimited.com

Facebook: facebook.com/diaboliquemagazine

Twitter: @DiaboliqueMag

8 WELCOME TO FRIGHT NIGHT

Sarah Crowther on the original 1985 shocker.

12 THE GENESIS OF FRANKENSTEIN

David L Rattigan

14 PUT AWAY THE FLESH

Daniel Bird on Jaromil Jires' Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders

20 BETWEEN HORROR AND SURREALISM

Peter Haymes on Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders

31 LOAM

A macabre piece of original short fiction from Joan Eyles Johnson

32 NEW NIGHTMARES

Drew Beard examines Post-Millenial Eastern European Horror Film

42 DR KNOX'S DISSECTION TABLE

David L Rattigan deconstructs a scene from Hammer's 1968 occult thriller, The Devil Rides Out

44 RED STATE OR RED TAPE

Robert J.E. Simpson on the marketing tools utilised for Kevin Smith's latest feature

48 JERZY SKOLIMOWSKI'S DEEP END

David Kleiler re-evaluates this obscure 1960s British film which is experiancing a rebirth

56 SLAUGHTER OF THE VAMPIRES

Robyn Talbot's ongoing entry in his Italian Gothic series

65 BOOK REVIEW

Adrian Smith on Kim Newman's Nightmare Movies

FTER OUR MUCH-LAUD-ED Vincent Price special, we're back with our usual mix of horror old and new. This issue's cover feature is a film I suspect the vast majority of our readers will be unfamiliar with - a surrealist 1970s Czech piece called Valerie And Her Week Of Wonders. It was brought to our attention by our publisher, who cites it as one of his all-time favourite films. A challenging film that centres on a adolescent girl-watching it back I'm reminded of Jonathan Miller's Alice in Wonderland, or one of Ken Russell's wonders. Kudos to Second Run here in the UK for bringing it to a wider market via DVD.

In amongst this issue's other features on *Deep End* (another forgotten classic, brought back to life via the BFI as part of their Flipside range of discs) and Kevin Smith's *Red State*, we're introducing a number of shorter features. We're constantly striving to bring a diverse mix to you, and I hope we're striking the right balance. Feel free to fire your feedback to us via email.

There's a lot of politics at play in the subtext of the horrors up for discussion this month, and knowingly so—not just imposed upon the horror after the event by critics. Arguably there was a political motivation behind the Hammer gothics scripted by the great Jimmy Sangster (who died recently). Haven't you ever thought about why all the villains are Germanic/Eastern European? Considering it was so close to the end of the war I'm convinced there were scores to settle.

And it is impossible not to read a political angle in the mondo movement of director Gualtiero Jacopetti (who also died in August)—the mondo films' obsession with death and the gruesome is almost a response to the footage that would come back from the Vietnam war. These days it seems when there is a political angle, horror cinema is shirking away from dealing with it, or does so ham-fistedly.

There's also a dominance of 'Red' in this issue—aside from political connotations (can it ever be anything other than left-wing/communist ideology?) there is of course a representation of blood, and blood/gore have always been important in horror. For some, if there isn't an abun-

dance of gore-soaked imagery on screen, they'll complain that the film just doesn't cut the mustard. But used carefully, colours can penetrate and play with our experience. Think of Nic Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, in which the red of the little girl's mackintosh starts to bleed through the film, catching the eye thanks to a dearth of colour amid Venice's streets. [I wonder how the experience is altered watching the film either in black and white, or on an original print in which the colour is on the turn?]. The pointless remake of *The Omen* a few years ago borrowed the theme and overplayed the hand.

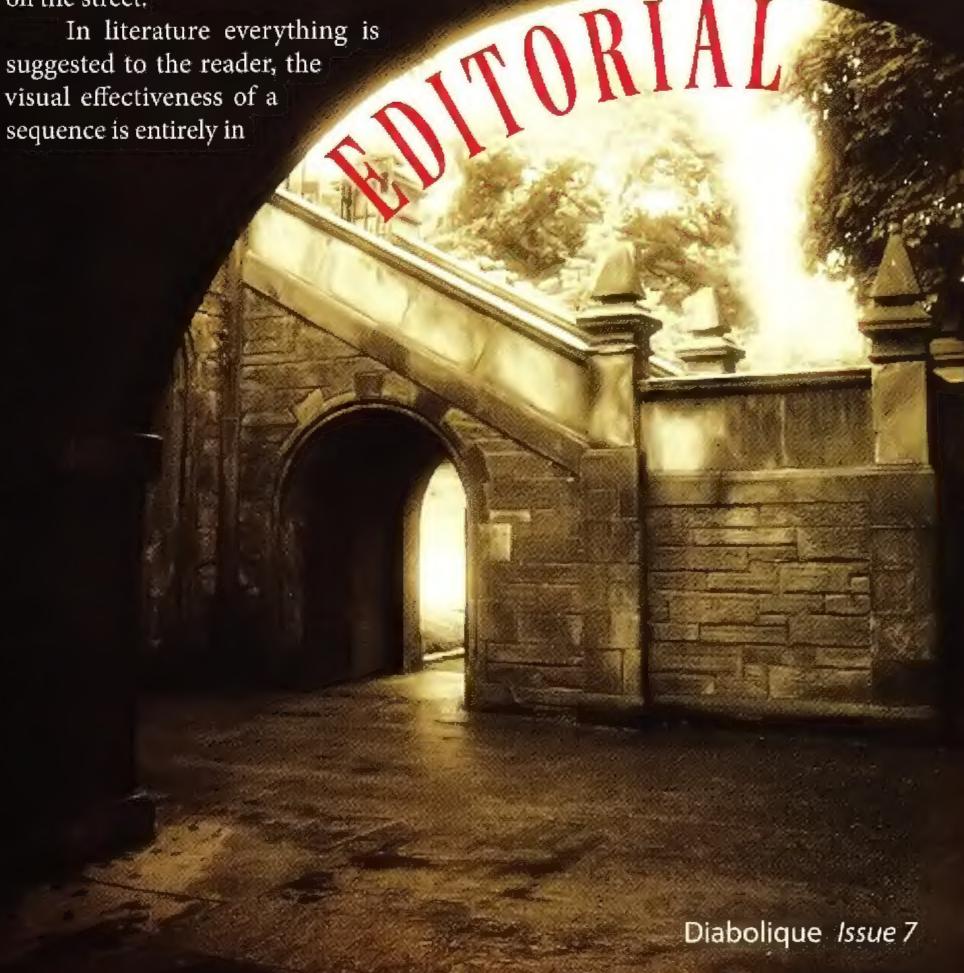
Circling round in my thoughts I go back to Jimmy Sangster and that wonderful opening of the 1958 Dracula, as the camera tracks down the staircase into the cellar and then up to the coffin with the 'Dracula' name embossed, we hear the dripping as vivid red blood is dropped onto the nameplate. Kensington Gore, as it was known, has come in for a lot of abuse over the years. Too vivid for the modern palate, and yet very effective and quite authentic. Some of you might not know that Kensington Gore is in fact a real road in London - that skirts the bottom of Hyde Park. I was thrilled the first time I encountered that name on the street.

the realms of the imagination. I've been reading the recent reissues of Graham Masterton's novels, and was very struck by some of the grotesque imagery in Family Portratit. The sort of thing I suspect the film censors would be up in arms about if it made its way to the big screen—on a parallel to Tom Six's Human Centipede perhaps?

Finally, much thanks this issue to David L Rattigan, who if anything did even more assisting than last time. The Diabolique team is spread around the world, and even the simplest of tasks is unbelievably complicated. Especially when the winter weather starts to close in, and the broadband fails, the phone lines go down and the printers decide they don't want to ship the magazine despite protesting... And here in the UK we're bracing ourselves for another rough winter.

Don't forget, there's more content in the digital and online editions of the magazine, regular columns on the website; and the new *Diabolique Radio Show/ Podcast* with Steve Head, available via our website and iTunes.

> Robert Editor





From: Second Run DVD

VALERIE AND HER WEEK OF WONDERS

A film by Jaromil Jireš, 1970 Feature: 73 minutes; DVD Extras: 26 minutes Subtitles: English; Language: Czech

SPECIAL FEATURES

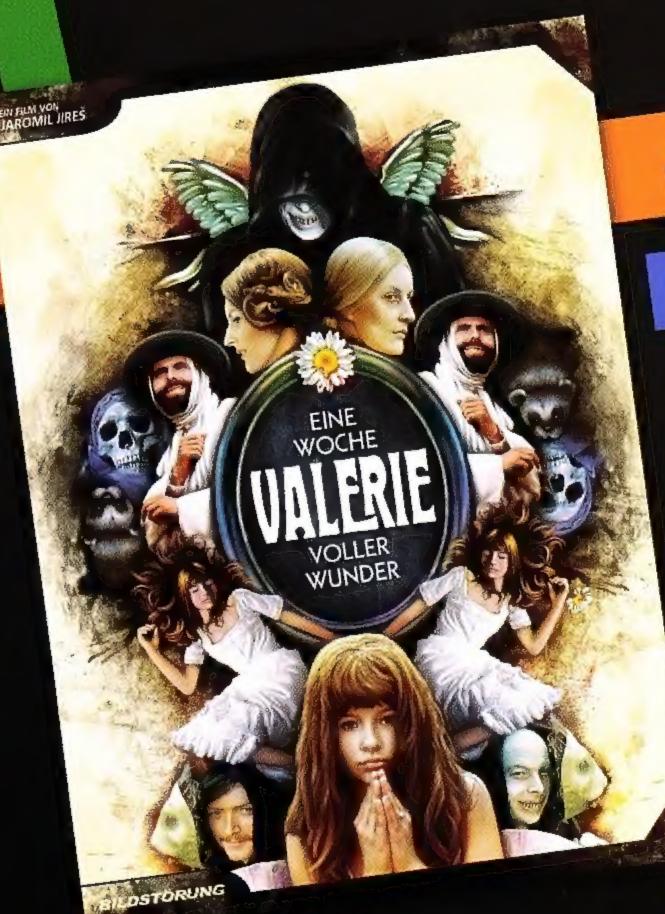
- Introduction by writer and film historian Michael Brooke. - Interview with Valerie star, Jaroslava Schallerová. - Digitally re-mastered with restored picture and sound. - New and improved English subtitle translation.
 - Optimal quality dual layer disc.

secondrundvd.com

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders

Valerie a týden dívů) A film by Jaromil Jireš





VALERIE AND HER WEEK OF WONDERS

A film by Jaromil Jireš, 1970

Subtitles: German; Language: Czech Feature: 73 minutes

SPECIAL FEATURES

- A separate audio CD of original music by Luboš Fiser - Audio commentary with Daniel Bird and Peter Hames
- (author of The New Wave Czechoslowak)
- Optional audio track with the alternate soundtrack from
- "Waking Valerie" documentary on the making of the The Valerie Project
- "Valerieholics" Andy Votel, Trish Keenan, Joseph A. film (20 minutes) Gervasi & Gergory Week in the interview (12 min) - Music clip from the track "Valerie" by Broadcast

bildstoerung.tv

FAREWELL, JIMMY SANGSTER (1927-2011)

The story of how Hammer Films came to be associated with and celebrated for Gothic horror cannot be told without reference to one of its chief architects, Jimmy Sangster, who died in August.

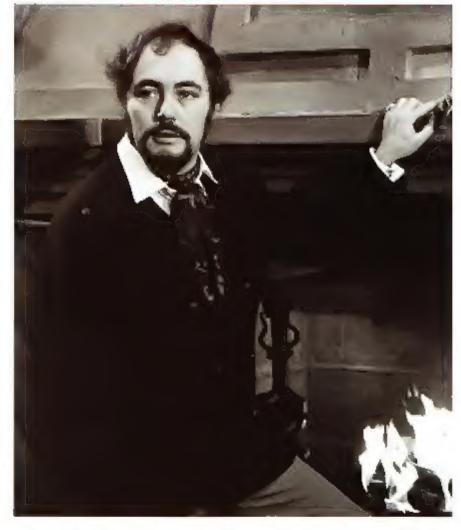
the formidable task of writing a new Frankenstein film that would engage an audience that, in 1957, was coming of age. There could and would not be any of that Universal horror hokum: Universal would not allow it, and besides, that style of monster movie had begun looking camp and cheesy more than a decade earlier. And Hammer horror, despite the now-popular caricature owing more to a few duds from the 1960s, was not to be particularly camp or cheesy.

On the contrary, Jimmy Sangster created a sophisticated character in Baron Frankenstein to sustain a first-rate series that stood well apart from its American forebears. Sangster infused his script with a wit and irony that would characterize the best entries in the series (five of them being superb, two of them—The Evil of Frankenstein and The Horror of Frankenstein—disappointing). "Who knows, my dear, perhaps you will," the Baron says, examining Elizabeth's features after she expresses her enthusiasm for helping him in his experiments. "Someday."

Immediately following, Sangster



was charged with scripting *Dracula* (aka *The Horror of Dracula*, 1958). But how to get suspense from a story everyone already knows inside out? Cleverly, Sangster introduced a twist whereby Harker is not who he seems at first: Having appeared to be a librarian unintentionally



caught in Dracula's web, it transpires Harker's mission from the very beginning was to seek out Dracula and destroy him.

But Jimmy Sangster made it clear over the years that the Gothic horrors were not his first love. He looked back most fondly on the black-and-white psychological thrillers he wrote and produced for Hammer, beginning with *Taste* of Fear (aka Scream of Fear) in 1961.

It's my opinion that the last of the cycle, The Nanny (1965), represented his finest hour and perhaps one of the finest films in the entire Hammer canon. Seth Holt directed, but Sangster was writer and producer, and it's very obvious he was the chief creative mind behind the production. When one looks at the source material, Sangster's achievement is even more striking. The novel, by Evelyn Piper, is a plodding read, poorly written and banal in its details. Transferring the setting from New York to London, whittling down the cast of characters to a fairly small ensemble and revising Piper's plot to form a tight, simple storyline resulted in a brilliantly slick and suspenseful thriller out of fairly tacky and unpromising material. Sangster saw the potential in the basic premise-summed up perfectly in the movie's tagline, "Who would you trust—the nanny or the boy?"—and transformed it into one of Hammer's classiest films. His handling of the film earned him a great deal of respect from star Bette Davis, which was no mean feat, and they became lifelong friends.

It's true Sangster made some duds, which he later attributed to the unusual situation of being given almost complete control of a production, as both director and producer (*Lust for a Vampire*), and even in the triple role of writer, director and producer (*Horror of Franken*-



stein, Fear in the Night). Like any talent, it evidently suffered without the necessary checks and balances.

But we would not have Hammer horror as we know it today without the contribution of Jimmy Sangster. We might, in fact, have had simply a lack-lustre series of poor imitations of the Universal monster movies. Instead, we have a catalogue of original, uniquely British films that trod new paths in Gothic horror. And Jimmy Sangster, who passed away August 19, age 83, is one of a handful of pioneers we must thank for that.

DLR

WELCOME TO ERIGHTO HIGHERO ERICHTO TO NOTE TO 100 A 100 A

If you love being scared it'll be the night of your life.

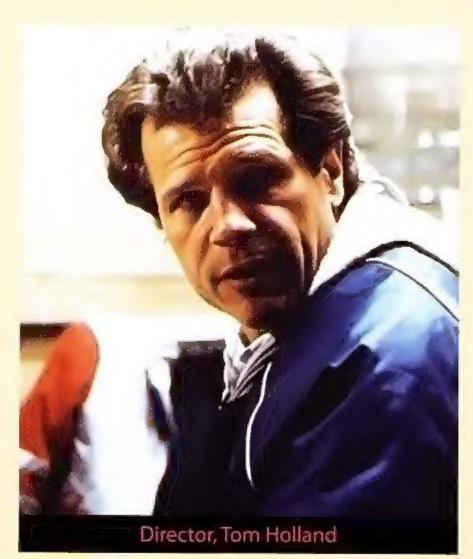
In 1985 a moderately budgeted film about a teenager who enlists the help of a fading horror star to battle the vampire next door captured the imagination and hearts of a generation of genre fans with a camp humour and affection for vintage horror that set it apart from the 1980's slasher pack.

That film was Fright Night and that affection did not go unnoticed as a megabudget remake arrived in UK cinemas this summer. Yet Fright Night is not a genre blockbuster ranking among the Friday the 13th, Nightmare On Elm Street and Halloween remake juggernauts; so why has this film retained such cult fervour and found itself in the remake spotlight?

ESPITE ITS AVER-AGE budget and the moderate intentions of its producers, Fright Night was a cinematic hit, returning a US box office of \$24,922,237. In fact the film was the second highest performing horror film of the year-losing out on the top spot to the highly-anticipated Nightmare On Elm Street Part 2: Freddy's Revenge. Word quickly spread about the quirky vampire horror and the film won 3 Saturn Awards (Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films) in 1985 for Best Horror Film, Best Writing & Best Supporting Actor for Roddy McDowall. In the good old days of promotional freebies Fright Night film-goers were presented with a pair of plastic glow-in-thedark fangs, and a tie-in novel and series of comic books expanded on the exploits of Charley Brewster and his vampire-conquering chums. Fright Night Part 2 was released in 1988 with both Ragsdale and McDowall reprising their original roles. Tommy Lee Wallace (who had shown great form with Halloween 3: Season of the Witch) directed. However the film ditched much of the warmth and humour of the original in favour of boosting the scares, and grossed just over \$2 million in the US.

The failure of Fright Night Part 2 stands in direct correlation to the success of its predecessor: Fright Night is a horror film for horror fans. Our protagonist Charley Brewster is a horror geek who favours watching Hammeresque late night movies over "making out" with his girlfriend. Vintage horror memorabilia abounds in the film—most notably in Hammer-esque horror icon Peter Vincent's apartment, which showcases a cast of Klaus Kinski's Nosferatu

among a plethora of vintage posters and props—but also in Charley and his best friend "Evil" Ed's bedrooms. Charley and Ed are horror fans like us and we're all in on the joke. Nostalgia for vintage horror runs through the very veins of Fright Night and almost becomes the film's manifesto—as Peter Vincent reminds us all people want to see these days is "demented mad men running around in ski masks hacking up young virgins". A pre-Scream irony from a film that was released in the mid-1980's—the domain of the slasher flick. With Fright Night the



horror geeks win in every sense—Peter gets his late night horror show back, Charley gets the girl, Ed, well, he gets the final word. Indeed following the success of Fright Night a number of light-hearted vampire films (including Vamp and The Lost Boys) appeared in the multiplexes, nudging the demented madmen aside long before the day-glo days of Twilight.

Fright Night marked the directorial debut of Tom Holland who also wrote the film's script. Holland began his career as an actor in a number of US TV series and went on to become a screenwriter. In 1983 he wrote the script for the

underrated Psycho 2 (in the days when sequels still had something new to say) and his genre career was born. Holland reunited with Fright Night's own vampire-in-residence, Chris Sarandon, in the creepy 1988 demon doll hit Child's Play. His later genre offerings would include Thinner and Stephen King's The Langoliers alongside three episodes of Tales from the Crypt from 1989 to 1992, and the supremely creepy Masters of Horror episode 'We All Scream For Ice Cream' in 2007. Holland has never turned his back on horror and returned to the genre, this time in front of the camera, with a cameo as Bob in Adam Green's splatterfest Hatchet 2 (released in the UK this year). Clearly a fan of the genre, Holland crafted Fright Night as a vampire tale which featured the story of The Boy Who Cried Wolf (with a dash of Rear Window thrown in). The suburban setting was intended to root the film in reality and ensure appeal to a modern audience. Holland's knowledge and affection for the genre shines through in his knowing script and clever characterisations, and makes the film stand out from the pack.

The warmth and enthusiasm which radiates from the writer/director also extends to pitch-perfect performances from the cast. William Ragsdale discovered that he had the part of Charley Brewster on Halloween night 1984 after a number of audition call-backs. Although he was 24 when he played the teenage Charley, Ragsdale perfectly captures teenage anxiety, and grounds himself as the serious heart of the film, while many around him play to the script's full camp potential. Ragsdale appeared in Fright Night Part 2 in 1988 but never went on to cinematic greatness and has since appeared mainly on US television. And what of Brewster's horror icon companion? Need we even



allude to the fact that Roddy McDowall's Peter Vincent was named after the heady horror combination of Peter Cushing and Vincent Price, when the film wears its passion for the genre so plainly on its sleeve? McDowall, already a fantasy star from his roles in The Planet of the Apes films, was the perfect actor to tackle the role of the fading genre superstar. Mc-Dowall was well-loved in Hollywood-a UK-born actor with the air of Hollywood royalty, known for his

close friendships with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift among others. Indeed when Vincent Price died in 1993 Roddy McDowall, one of his closest friends, was at his bedside. McDowall certainly embraces the camp potential of the Hammer-style fading star, struggling to find his niche, and retain both his home and humour, in the increasingly brutal world of genre cinema. However, as best regarded in Evil Ed's death scene in which he shifts from terror, to revulsion, to empathatic tears, McDowall brought depth

Facing off against our fearless vampire killers was the swarthy Chris Sarandon as vampire-next-door Jerry Dandridge. With his zombie man-servant, Billy Cole (about which much speculation abounds online), Dandridge swooned into the neighbourhood leaving a stream of female corpses in his wake; seducing Charley's mother and girlfriend, and hanging his teenage neighbour from the window. Previously nominated for an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for Dog Day Afternoon, Sarandon provided serious acting chops and a hypnotic and sensual intensity, laced with the very darkest of humour. But perhaps the most memorable performance in Fright Night is that of Stephen Geoffreys who played Evil Ed, Charley's best friend and deliverer of the iconic line "You're so cool Brewster!" Fright Night marked one of Geoffreys' first film performances, following a Tony nomination for his stage work, and his unique delivery and obvious relish of Ed's horrific character developments, made his the stand-out performance in film of fantastic performances. Geoffreys went on to create another outrageous genre character in the Robert Englund-directed





976-Evil in 1988, but surprisingly refused to appear in the Fright Night sequel—to the cost of both the film and his career. Geoffreys appeared to be a natural in the horror genre but his career took a dramatic swerve when he became a hardcore gay porn star (under the pseudonyms Sam Ritter and Stephan Bordeaux) in 1994. He made his return to mainstream cinema in 2007 in indie horror Sick Girl.

It is important not to underestimate the role of the female cast of Fright Night who also have plenty of material into which to sink their teeth. Amanda Bearse (Charley's girlfriend, Amy Peter son) was 27 when she played the teenage Amy. She was previously best-known for the US soap Days Of Our Lives. Bearse went on to become a key cast member in comedy hit Married With Children and hit the headlines when she became the first prime-time actresses to come out as being a resbian following a 1993 interview with The Advocate magazine. She went on to become a television director. Bearse's Amy is a feisty foe to both Charley and Dandridge - both of whom she alternately battles and seduces. And, while not a major role, Dorothy Fielding is absolutely in on the joke as Judy Brewster, Charley's

mother, delivering maternal advice and scatterbrain humour with natural ease

There are two more stars of Fright Night who, while not cast members, play as key a role as the performers in bringing the film so vividly to life. They are Visual Effects Designer Richard Edlund and score composer Brad Fieldel While some of Fright Night's brilliant, scary effects may now appear a tad dated, who can forget the gooey disintegration of Billy Cole, Sarandon's transformation into the bat-like creature that defies his true identity; and, most notably, the extraordinary transformation from wolf to human of the recently staked Ed which manages to elicit sympathy alongside revulsion. Edlund has proved to be one of the visual effect greats with work on Star Wars, Ghostbusters and Poltergeist among many others - and the creation of Industrial Light & Magic with George Lucas. Brad Fiedel is perhaps best known for the score of The Terminator films, but his haunting, seductive score for Fright Night is among his finest work. The track 'Come To Me provides arguably the most sensual, atmospheric backdrop to any cinematic scene of vampiric seduction and lingers long in the memory.

So what of the Fright Night amake which hit cinemas across the world this year with much bluff and marketing bluster in its wake? Perhaps II in appropriate that Chris Sarandon is the only beginal cast member to return for it is his conic words as the devlish Dandridge to which the remake filmmakers should pay attention: "You have to have faith for that to work Mr Vincent Let's just hope that the faith in the genre and the affection that brought Brewster and his vampirehunting comrades so warmly and vividly to life, extends to the remake. I, for one, be sticking with the original Fright Night...for real.

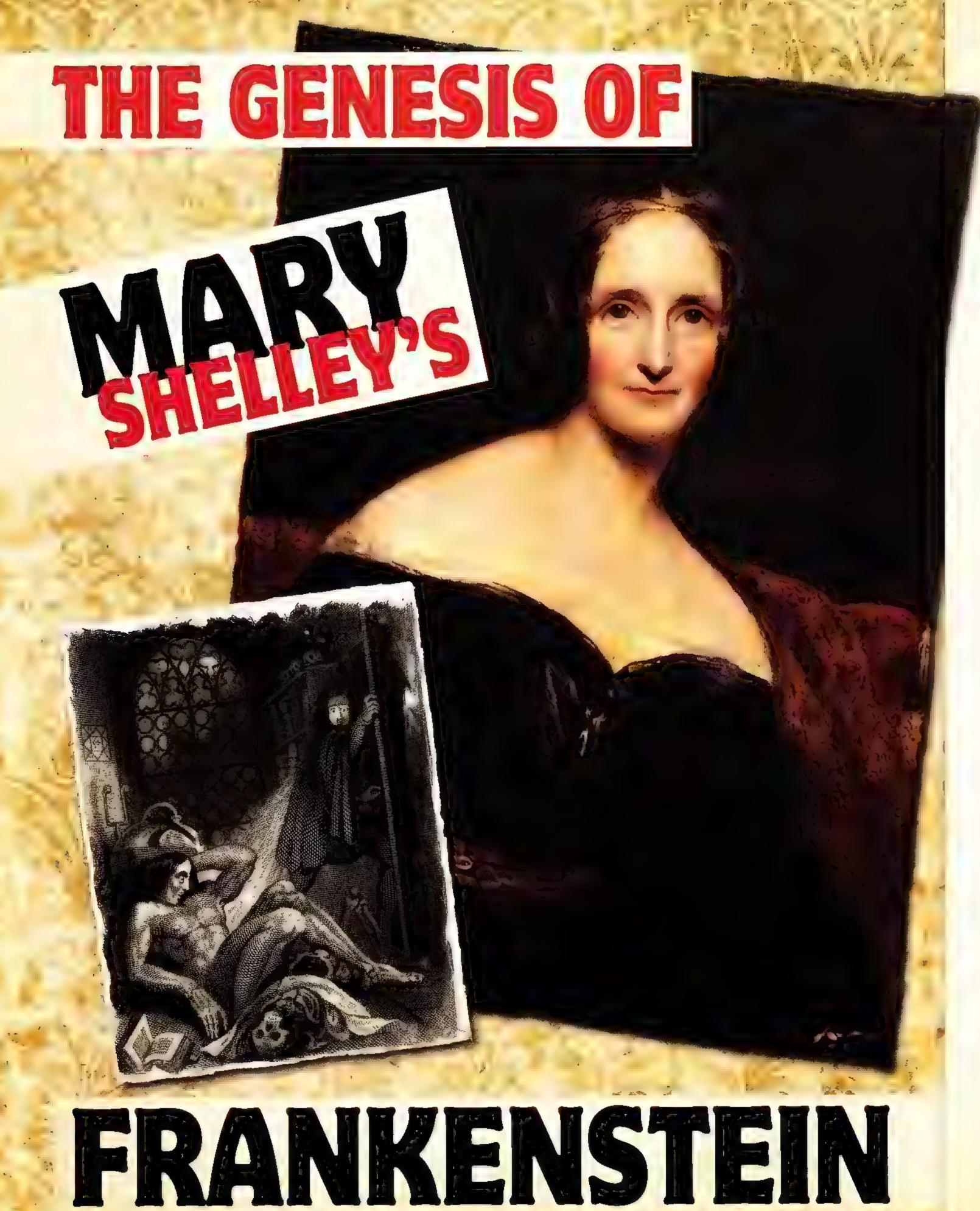
by SARAH CROWTHER





Sarah Crowther has worked as a journalist and researcher, and is employed by the National Media Museum in West Yorkshire, where she programmes

the horror and fantasy festival Fantastic Films Weekend. She is particularly interested in Argento, giallo and contemporary French horror.



Researchers shed new (moon)light on an enigma surrounding the origins of the classic horror novel.

November," as the rain "pattered dismally against the panes" and by the faint light of an almost-extinguished candle that Frankenstein's creature was born. But according to Mary Shelley, the birth of the book itself was almost in dramatic.

The scene is familiar, especially if you've seen James Whale's camped-up reconstruction in the prologue to the 1935

film The Bride of Frankenstein. Confined to a house on Lake Geneva because of an "ungenial summer" of "incessant rain," Shelley and her friends-her then-lover, Percy Bysse Shelley (not yet married, his teenage lover was still Mary Godwin at that time), Lord Byron and John Polidori-challenged one another to write ghost stories, inspired by a volume of German horror tales they had been reading together

for entertainment. In response, Mary penned the tale that would later become Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus.

Its creation was the very stuff of Gothic horror, according to the author's account. Moonlight spilled in through the window as Mary, in her bed, was "possessed and guided" by her imagination and saw Frankenstein and his creature in her mind "with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie":

I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of

life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. ... I opened [my eyes] in terror. The idea so possessed my mind, that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around. I see them still; the very room, the dark parquet, the closed shutters, with the moonlight struggling through, and the sense I had that the glassy lake and white high Alps were beyond. I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me.

all the way to Switzerland to see if the story bore out. Their findings appear in the November 2011 issue of the astronomy magazine Sky & Telescope.

The team visited the Villa Diodati, which still stands in the same spot above Lake Geneva, and determined that in the early hours of June 16, 1816, "a bright, gibbous moon would have cleared the hillside to shine right into Shelley's bedroom window just before 2am." Astronomer Donald Olson led the research team,

examining historic weather records and surveying the terrain around the manor to reach his conclusions.

Mystery solved?

"Mary Shelley wrote about moon-light shining through her window," Olson told Reuters, "and now we have recreated that night. We see no reason to doubt her account, based on the astronomical data."

Olson is not new

to what he calls "forensic astronomy." His previous research included a study of Edvard Münch's painting *The Scream*, which he says was inspired by a volcanic eruption that created a red sky over Oslo in 1893. "A flaming sword of blood slashed open the vault of heaven," wrote Münch at the time, and "the atmosphere turned to blood." In 2009, Olson's art- and literature-inspired investigations earned him the epithet "Celestial Sleuth" from *Smithsonian* magazine.

DLR



haunted my midnight pillow."

But so unabashedly romantic was this account of *Frankenstein*'s genesis, scholars have generally been skeptical whether it really happened as she claimed. Was it embellished, if not outright fiction?

"What terrified me will terrify oth-

ers," she concluded, and she set about

putting on paper "the spectre which had

whether it really happened as she claimed.
Was it embellished, if not outright fiction?
In particular, the mention of moonlight pouring in through Mary's window after "even the witching hour had gone by" has been called into question.

It is, it turns out, entirely possible.

Two physicists and an English professor
from Texas State University journeyed

13 Diabolique Issue 7

iguit avvay tine flesh

NOTES ON JAROMIL JIRES' VALERIE AND HER WEEK OF WONDERS

Jaromil Jires's Valerie and Her Week of Wonders (1970) is becoming increasingly recognized as a key film of the Czechoslovak New Wave. Indeed, numerous commentators have even gone as far as to suggest that it is in fact the New Wave's Swan Song.

the UK, however, Jires was chastised in some circles for following up a brave, politically conscientious work—his 1968 adaptation of Milan Kundera's The Joke—with a film more reminiscent of the lesbian schlock-horror emanating from the continent and, closer to home, the Hammer Studios, then entering its autumnal years.

Jires's film can be considered unique, therefore, in that it occupies a place close to the hearts of both aficionados of Eastern European cinema of the 1960s and the Gothic horror traditions of Italy, France and England.

valerie-the musical

of Valerie and Her Week of Wonders has tended to focus on its Czech New Wave credentials and, increasingly, its place in the canon of European horror. It is also a musical, however, in that song and dance play a significant role in the film. While not a musical in the MGM/Busby Berkeley sense, in which musical numbers puncture the action like the choral stasimons in Greek drama, song and dance nevertheless play an integral part in the design of the film.

As in Robin Hardy's The Wicker Man (1973), diegetic music—Valerie practising her scales, the arrival of the circus, Orlik's guitar strumming, and, most notably, the climactic carnival that surounds Valerie's bed in the forest—perfectly keys in with Lubos Fišer's non-diegetic score.



In this respect, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders can be considered a musical in the way that The Red Shoes, Fame and All that Jazz are musicals—films about song and dance.

In Russian and Eastern European cinema of the 1960s and '70s, song and dance is a vital aspect of so-called "poetic cinema," particularly the Kiev school that sprung up around Paradjanov's Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors. Similarly, ethnic song and dance would feature significantly in the cinema of the Caucasus (Paradjanov's later work, the early films of Tengiz Abuladze), not to mention Miklós Jancsó's highly choreographed "crowd plain" films (most notably Red Psalm and Elektra) as well as the films of Juraj Jakubisko.

Indeed, while it is covered by Jireš and Curík in a comparatively static, almost pictorial fashion, the climax of *Val*-



erie and Her Week of Wonders ends like Jakubisko's Deserter, with a crowd dancing around a bed, upon which the (two dead) protagonist(s) lay.

Equally, the film can be described as musical in terms of its montage. While the narrative of *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* does not sustain close scrutiny, it works in terms of its rhythmic, repetition of images, sounds and faces.

carnival(erie)

S IN THE Wicker Man, carnival figures significantly in Valerie and Her Week of Wonders.

In addition to music, the film features both processions (the arrival of the circus, the solemn procession nuns led by Gracián, the crowd of flagellants that descend on the fountain in the town square) and music, not to



mention masquerade (most notably Weasel's mask), but also Grandma's transformation.

Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal Rabelais and His World was translated into both English and French in 1968, thus bringing the Russian philosopher's ideas about the roots of genre in ancient folkloric forms to the West.

While Bakhtin's category of "carni-

val" was developed principally as a analytical tool for literary genres, the ideas that informed it—chiefly those of German Neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer, the French philosopher Henri Bergson and the Soviet Classicist Olga Friedenberg—had a direct bearing on Eisenstein's "cinematic carnivals" during his sound period: Alexander Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible, especially the "dance of the oprichniki" that ends Part 2, as well as the aborted Bezhin Meadow, featur-

ing a sequence in which peasants transform a Russian Orthodox church into a clubhouse.

In Bakhtin's chapter on genre in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, his definition of the characteristics of carnival provide a useful analysis of the climax of Valerie and Her Week of Wonders:

A suspension of hierarchical structure (Gracián's imprisonment in the bird cage);

The collapsing of distance between people (the hippie forest "love-in" of Valerie's family and friends;

Combinations of sacred and profane (the orginistic dancing of miniskirted nuns);

Ritual mock crowning and uncrowning of a carnival king based on the trope of perpetual death and renewal (Who is the carnival king in *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*? Or queen? Is it Valerie? Does the "magic hour" light of her final dream signify the dusk of her childhood and the dawn of womanhood?);

Celebration of the relativity of symbolic order (everyone in Valerie's world is equal).

double roles

s well as featuring physical masks, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders makes good use of costume, makeup and hairstyles as disguise, particularly in the case of Helena Anýzová as Grandmother/Babicka, Elsa, Mother/Matka and Rusovláska. Far from concealing an identity, however, the casting of one actress in each of the four roles draws attention to the relationship between the four roles.

The casting of the same actress in multiple roles was certainly in vogue during the late sixties and early seventies, particularly in Eastern European art cinema. Skolimowski cast his then-wife Elzbieta Czyzewska in *Rysposis* (1964), and Zulawski cast his future wife Malgorzata Braunek in *Trzecia czesc nocy* (1971).

A case could be put forward that in her dreams (a dissociative, trance-like state), Valerie is splitting her mother and father into multiple roles, as per Charcot and Janet's psychiatry of the late nineteenth century. Unlike Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Valerie's mother plays four roles, and her father two (the intercutting of Valerie's father with Weasel's Nosferatu-like face behind mask and fan during the circus procession).

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders could be said to depict dissociative phenomena, like Stevenson's A Child's Garden of Verses (1928), the fairytales of Hans Christian Andersen and Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland. With Anderson and



Carroll, much attention has been paid to the role of their childhood neglect and their respective conjuring of a fantasy world was a necessary form of psychic escape from a conflictual real world.

If Valerie's story of sexual awakening is initially traumatic, then it all ends happily with a scene in which all the fragments of her fantasy are resolved or dissolved, the dark aspects fully integrated into the light, divorced from moral tones, like some pre-Christian pagan world.

high-angle shots

N TERMS OF composition, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders is notable for its high-angle shots. High-angle shots necessitate the camera being mounted above the eye-line of the actors, except in one instance: when the actor is lying down, facing up. It could



be argued that high-angle shots correspond to Valerie's dream state—shots of her lying down on her bed looking up are repeated throughout the film like an interlude or refrain, and the positioning of the camera meets her gaze. The combination of high-angle shots and Jire's and Curík's wide-angle lens often results in actors being consumed by the setting.

The aerial shot of Valerie's friend writhing among bare tree branches lies somewhere between Hokusai's *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife* (the spiritual ancestor of the "tits'n' tentacles" genre typical of Japanese Hentai animation) and the infamous "tree-rape" scene in Sam Rami's *The Evil Dead*. The scene also alludes to the biblical book of Genesis, where the girl, playing Eve, transforms the tree branches into both snake and forbidden fruit.

In another scene, the Gothic clockwork mechanisms of Weasel's lair recall



the Piranesi dungeons that intrigued Eisenstein so much because of their "ecstatic" qualities. "Ecstasy" literally means "out of body," and such high-angle, widelens compositions present Valerie's head as the focal point out of which setting, characters and action explode like a bomb blast.

Such framing and angles also recall the panels typical of comic strips—a visual analogue to the low-brow serials of Feulliade so beloved by Nezval.



revolution: valerie in context

comes from the 16th-century Italian word "carnevale," in turn from the Latin word for Shrovetide, "carnelevarium," meaning "put away the flesh." As the "feast before the fast," Valerie and Her Week of Wonders can, with the benefit of hindsight, be considered a final, orgiastic indulgence of the Czech New Wave be-

fore the austerity measures of post-invasion 1970s Czechoslovakia kicked in. Not financial austerity, but ideological: Milos Forman, Ivan Passer and Jan Nemec would leave Czechoslovakia; Jakubisko and Vera Chytilova would be blacklisted from directing features; and Jireš had to change his tune before being sidelined in television.

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders was shot in 1969, the same year as the Woodstock festival: the heroine's hippie dream evaporates in the final shot—just as the Prague Spring did in 1968 when Russian tanks rolled into Prague.

The Dionysian climactic scene betrays an idealistic "back to the land" ethos of a pre-Christian pagan era, emphasizing the importance of food (grapes) and animals (the goat). Unlike The Wicker Man, which presents such festivity as a thing of horror, especially in the eyes of Edward Woodward's staunchly Christian policeman hero, the revelry of Valerie's friends chimes with Pasolini's humanist "trilogy of life," which focused on the bawdy goings-on during the Renaissance era (Boccaccio's Decameron and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales), as well as non/pre-Christian mythologies (Arabian Nights, Oedipus Rex and Medea).

While Valerie and Her Week of Wonders can in no way be considered an ethnographic film, its non-Christian appeal to the supernatural (vampires) renders it "folkloristic." Nezval and Jires offer up a



manufactured folklore, however, a bricolage of Western literary and pop-cultural references (*Nosferatu*, etc) to vampires and vampirism, as opposed to drawing on Eastern European notions of vampires as suckers of life force rather than blood.

soft porn?

T THE TIME of its UK release,
Time Out's critic compared
Valerie and her Week of
Wonders to Bo Weideberg's
Elvira Madıgan, a film the
same magazine noted was pretty to the
point of making the viewer sick. The lyricism of Valerie and Her Week of Wonders
sometimes veers close to Milan Kundera's
definition of kitsch in The Joke:

Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: How nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch. In The Unbearable Lightness of Being, kitsch is "the absolute denial of shit."

While Valerie and Her Week of Wonders plunders the hippy "back to the land" rural ideals latent in Jakubisko's films, it lacks their dirt and grubbiness. The white dresses of Valerie and her friends not once get sullied, bringing to mind Ken Russell's criticism of Attenborough's Ghandi as resembling a TV commercial for soap powder.

While not soft-focus, Jireš and Curík dreamy, most definitely male gaze on pubescent, frequently nude, girls (most notably in the romantic 'wet T-shirt' revelry in the stream during the opening section of the film) bears comparison with the photography of David Hamilton whose Rêves de jeunes filles (Dreams of a Young Girl) would be published in 1971. Valerie and Her Week of Wonders, like its Gothic literary forebears, most notably Matthew Lewis's The Monk, is male erotic fantasy.

Jires's film would nonetheless become an important touchstone for the "Sadeian Woman"—a woman recognized for her sexual appeal and not just breeding potential—a term coined by Angela Carter and reflected not least in the stories contained in *The Bloody Chamber*, later filmed by Neil Jordan (from a screenplay by Carter herself) as *The Company of Wolves*.



in the company of vampires

Wonders followed in the wake of Italian Gothic cinema (Mario Bava, Antonio Margheriti), coincided with the European art-sex-horror boom (Jess Franco, Jean Rollin, Daughters of Darkness) and pre-empted the sexualization of Hammer Horror (the Karnstein Trilogy, Countess Dracula). Hammer took on talent from behind the iron curtain, both in front of and behind the lens (Polishborn Ingrid Pitt and Hungarian-born Peter Sasdy, respectively).

Mention must also be made of Olga Schoberová, best known to Czech audiences for her turns in the cult Western Lemonade Joe and the comic book strip Who Killed Jessie? Renamed Olinka Berova, Schoberová appeared in the Ursula Andress role in Hammer's 1968 sequel to She, The Vengeance of She. After appearing in the title role of Le calde notti di Poppea, she returned to Czechoslovakia to star in Jakubisko's Dovidenia v pekle priatelia! Like Jakubisko's Deserter and the Nomads, it was another Italian co-production, produced by Maurice Ergas (then married to Fellini regular Sandra Milo). Another late Czech New Wave film, Dovidenia v pekle priatelia!, like Juraj Herz' Morgiana appeals to the fantastic, featuring 'grubby Fellini dreams' typical of the director's early work, not to mention his signature sacral/profane carnivalesque imagery. However, unlike Valerie and Her Week of Wonders and Morgiana, its political undercurrent wasn't sublimated into blasphe-

mous biblical im-

19

agery quite enough, and the project was shut down, to be resumed twenty years later immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

While English critics slighted Valerie and Her Week of Wonders as a lapse into erotic horror on the part of a talented director, the Cold War context must not be ignored. Dissident' directors were to be championed, often at the expense of those exploring fantasy, who could have been likened to ostriches burying their heads in sand. Witness, for example, the euphoria which greeted Nemec's A Report on the Party and the Guests, and the critical neglect of the same director's homage to silent surrealism, Martyrs of Love.

As the wall came down, attentions turned to less politically contentious films and filmmakers, resulting in the growing interest in films and directors who "didn't fit" the first time around. most notably the largely apolitical, grotesque phantasmagoria of Juraj Herz. In the eyes of film enthusiasts and musicians in both the UK and the US, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders is the biggest discovery.



Daniel Bird had read Psychology and Philosophy at Keele University before completing his Master's Degree in Philosophy at Warwick. He has worked as a film writer and program-

mer, organising retrospectives on Walerian Borowczyk, Jerzy Skolimowski and Andrzej Zulawski among others. He published his first book on Roman Polanski and produced three documentary films on the director's early career. In 2002 he received a scholarship from the Polish government to study in Warsaw. In 2005 he directed a performance based on the Medea myth in the Wieliczka Salt Mine financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture. In 2006 he directed a performance, Monolog, that was selected by theatre festivals in Poland, Ukraine, Armenia, Sweden, Latvia and Cyprus. Since 2007 he has been producing documentaries on Eastern European films and filmmakers. In 2009 a retrospective of his films was screened at the Warsaw Centre for Contemporary Arts.





BETWEEN HORROR AND SURREALISM













Valerie and Her Week of Wonders

The screen incarnation of Valerie's fairy tale world sprang out of a time of political turmoil in Czechoslovakia, writes Peter Hames...

Wonders (Valerie a týden divů, 1969) was first shown in October 1970, two years after the Warsaw Pact countries had invaded Czechoslovakia and sup-

pressed the Prague Spring reforms. The reform programme introduced in 1968 had aimed, in the words of leader Alexander Dubček, at "the widest possible democratisation of the entire socio-political system." The "reform Communists" sought an ideal they believed to have been perverted during the post-War years of Stalinism and subservience to Soviet domination. The architect of the economic reforms, Ota

Šik, even

wrote a book entitled *The Third Way*, although its vision was somewhat to the left of New Labour's similar manifesto in late nineties Britiain. Nobody knew what effects such reforms might have or where they might lead, and Czechoslovakia's socalled allies chose not to take any chances.

The Prague Spring did not happen overnight, and alongside the political reforms, which were largely hatched behind closed doors, the 1960s saw a remarkable cultural revival and increased liberalization. The Prague theatre saw the first plays of Václav Havel—then only a playwright and not a dissident—and productions of Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco and others whose work differed substantially

from the simplified moralities and oppositions of Soviet Socialist Realism. Novelists such as Josef Škvorecký (The Cowards/Zbabělci), Bohumil Hrabal (Closely Observed Trains/Ostře sledované vlaky) and Milan Kundera (The Joke/Žert) demonstrated

a more open and critical approach to literature. In the visual arts, there were popart and kinetic art exhibitions as well.

In the cinema, it was the period of the



Czechoslovak New Wave, a movement arguably unique in film history, when film makers, free of market demands, produced some remarkable personal and often politically critical films. Although it was, as the surrealist film maker Jan Švankmajer once put it, a "pre-revolutionary situation," it was not a case of official liberalization. Many key films were banned—only to be released in 1968—and others were hidden away from all but specialized audiences. But a new generation of film makers, educated under "socialism," was flexing its muscles.

The process arguably began in 1963, when three directors made their first features — Miloš Forman with Black Peter (Peter and Pavla /Černý Petr), Jaromil Jireš with The Cry (Křik) and Věra Chytilová with Something Different (O něčem jiném). All of these films were primarily of note for their fresh approach to everyday reality, and it was this humanist approach to the everyday that constituted the main international impact through films like For-

man's A Blonde in Love/Loves of a Blonde (Lásky jedné plavovlásky, 1965) and Jiří Menzel's Oscar-winning Closely Observed Trains (1966).

But alongside this was a more experimental line that looked back to the Kilian (Postava k podpírání, 1964) and A Case for the Young Hangman (Případ pro začínajíciho kata, 1969) took the cinema in radical new directions.

Following the Soviet invasion, the creative impetus of cinema was not imme-

something of a scandal with its nude images of Hedy Kiesler (later Lamarr) and was condemned by the Vatican. Another collaborator on these films was Alexandr Hackenschmied (Alexander Hammid), who later worked with Maya Deren in the United States. Nezval also worked with the avant-garde novelist and film maker Vladislav Vančura on his film On the Sunnyside (Na sluneční straně, 1933).

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders was written in 1935 but not published until 1945, when it received little attention. Clearly inspired by fairy stories and the Gothic novel, it was, wrote Nezval in his foreword, intended to appeal to those

who "gladly
pause at times
over the secrets
of certain old
courtyards, vaults,
summer houses
and those mental
loops which gyrate
around the mysterious."

In a key article on the novel
("On Valerie, Nezval,
Max Ernst, and Collage: Variations on a
Theme"), Giuseppe
Dierna suggests possible influences, such
as the Fantômas novels

by Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre, which had been published in Czech in the early 1930s, and Max Ernst's collagenovel A Little Girl Dreams of Taking the Veil (Rêve d'une petite fille qui voulut entrer au Carmel, 1930). Nezval was also an admirer of Matthew G Lewis's novel The Monk (1796), for which he had commissioned a Czech translation. He was familiar with FW Murnau's film Nosferatu (Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens, 1922), of which he wrote in a review, "in art horror must be more than horror-it must be poetry." These influences do not, of course, explain the novel, but they reveal something of the contexts in which it was produced.

Jaromil Jireš adapted the film with the writer and designer Ester Krumbachová, who had already worked with both



of the twenties and thirties. Films such as Jan Němec's Martyrs of Love (Mučedníci lásky, 1966) and The Party and the Guests (O slavnosti a hostech, 1966), Věra Chytilova's Daisies (Sedmikrásky, 1966) and The Fruit of Paradise (Ovoce stromů rajských jíme/Le Fruit de Paradis, 1969), František Vláčil's Marketa Lazarová (1967), and Pavel Juráček's Josef

Pavel Juráček's Josef



of films planned during the Prague Spring, but many were banned before or soon after release and few reached international audiences. Valerie and Her Week of W

audiences. Valerie and Her Week of Wonders was one of the last films of the movement, although Juraj Herz's Oil Lamps (Petrolejové lampy, 1971) and Morgiana (1972) can also be considered to be part of this late flowering.

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders was adapted from a novel by the poet Vítězslav Nezval, who had been active in the Poetist movement of the 1920s and co-founded the Czech Surrealist Group in 1934. One of the major writers of midtwentieth century modernism, he was also active in theatre and cinema, and collaborated on three features with the best-known Czech auteur of the 1920s and 1930s, Gustav Machatý—Erotikon (1929), From Saturday to Sunday (Ze soboty na neděli, 1931), and Ecstasy (Extase, 1932). The last of these created

Jan Němec and Věra Chytilová, and stylistic traits can certainly be traced across her work with all three directors. Jireš and Krumbachová, however, have adopted a more low-key and less threatening approach to the story than in the original novel. Jireš was not a surrealist and, although he described this as his favourite film, it was the only one that he made in the genre.

AM Píša suggested Nezval's work was based on the childish fantasy or dream, that his world was filled "with ghosts and dolls, not with people," and, of course, Valerie also evokes parallels with Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Both Nezval and Jireš create a world of dream. Nevertheless, David Wilson criticized the film on its British release as constituting only images of a dream recalled in retrospect. In fact, the film has a narrative development and a consistent cast of characters, creating a dream world that is arguably closer to the films of Fellini than the arbitrariness of real dreams.

The careful structure of the film, with its intricate web of associations and images, is essentially similar to a poem—an organized work of imagination. Throughout the film, thirteen-year-old Valerie is shown as an onlooker, a voyeur spying on scenes that she has deliberately imagined and, in this sense, it is based on conscious daydreaming. Frequently images are called up at dawn or





dusk, suggesting a world caught between the rational and the non-rational, waking and dreaming. Their sexual nature is linked thematically to the fact that this is the week in which she begins to menstruate and "becomes a woman." This schematic perspective suggests that all at once, she begins to perceive the sexual nature of her relatives and friends. But sexual awareness does not destroy her serenity, and she remains untouched by her sometimes horrific visions. Throughout the film, the images of Valerie herself are those of unchanging beauty, innocence and mischief.

The Waking Dream

The torch is carried by a young man, Orlík (Eaglet). Valerie is sleeping in a glass summer house. Orlík clambers over the roof, steals her earrings and makes off into the night. When Valerie wakes up and looks outside, she

hears a desolate howl and glimpses the terrifying white face of Tchoř (variously translated as Polecat, Skunk or Weasel), black-cloaked and closely resembling the figure of death in Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal (Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957). There is a rapid shot of a weasel apparently devouring another creature.

At first, it appears that Orlík is Tchor's assistant and that Tchor himself is a vampire who prolongs his life by feeding on chickens. He also preys on young girls-hence the symbolic form of the weasel, an animal that is at the same time phallic-shaped and sharp toothed. However, at later stages in the film, Tchoř is also identified as a constable, a bishop, the devil and Valerie's father. At times, his hideous white mask is replaced by the face of a beautiful, red-headed young man. Thus, one can argue that he represents the repressive power of (male) authority, a reassuring father figure and potential lover, and a vicious rapist/aged vampire. While he offers the prospect of comfort and security, it is more often the nightmarish face of a figure (father, priest, constable) that provokes only terror.

Orlík could be a boyfriend but is also represented as Tchor's son and therefore Valerie's brother. He is a reassuring figure who consistently retrieves Valerie's earrings, which protect her from danger, and is periodically released by her when undergoing punishment at the hands of Tchoř. He is actor, artist, poet and minstrel who sends her notes in magic writing and coloured inks, and sings her to sleep.



The third major figure is that of Valerie's grandmother. Insofar as it can be said that there is any "realistic" situation in the film, it is that of a young girl living alone with her grandmother in a provincial town at some ill-defined period toward the beginning of the twentieth century. Clues to some kind of everyday reality are apparent in the dining room exchanges between Valerie and her grandmother, an impression strengthened by the scene's early appearance in the film. The room is precisely designed in a repressive manner contrasting strongly with the

scenes, Grandmother appears reading a Bible, with the beads of a rosary held in front of her. She emerges from behind a grandfather clock like a clockwork doll, drifting like one of those figures that emerges on the hour. Her hair is drawn back in a severe fashion, and her face is deathly white. When Valerie announces that the actors have come to town and that one of them will stay with them (referring to Orlík), she replies, "You should be more interested in the arrival of the missionaries." In later fantasies, Grandmother turns out to be Elsa, a vampire and victim of Tchoř, but also Valerie's mother. Just as Tchoř represents authority and the aggressive threat of male sexuality, so Grandmother is the female equivalent. As Elsa, she offers lesbian temptation, and as her mother, she is in

The sexual

character of Val-

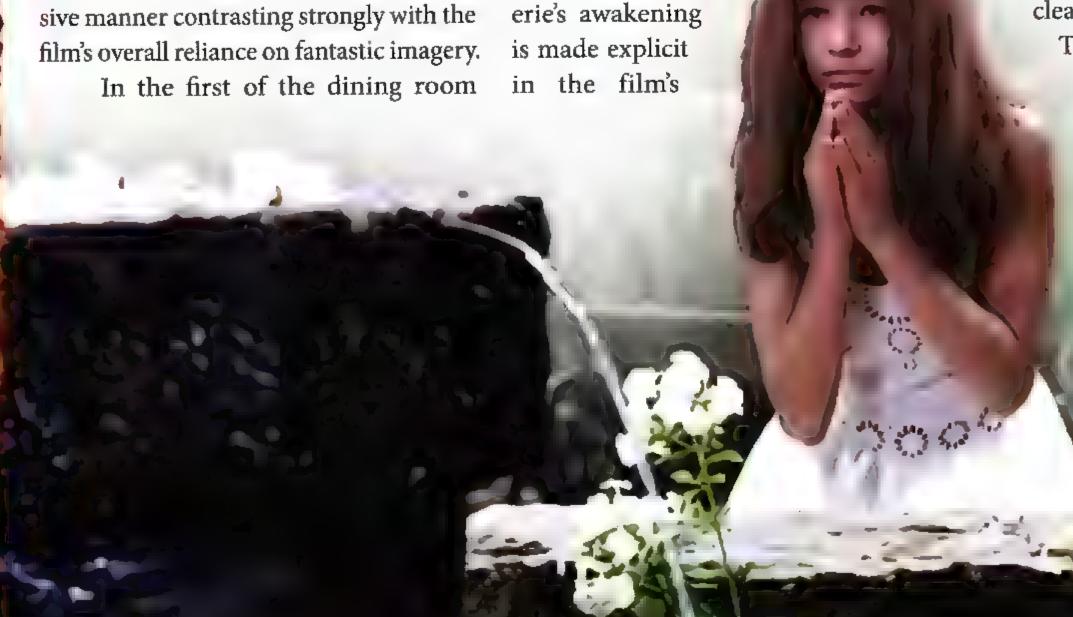
competition for her father's attention.

post-credit sequence. After Orlík has returned her earrings to her, she climbs into a carriage in the yard, its deep red interior providing a womblike security. She hides during a quarrel between Orlík and Tchoř. When they have gone, she leaves the carriage and, as she walks, she begins to menstruate. Spots of blood fall on to the paving stones and the daisies. She notices, picks a daisy and takes it to bed with her.

Valerie's realization that, as Grandmother puts it, she is no longer a child, leads directly to overt sexual fantasies. She is shown walking in the countryside, spying from behind bushes on village girls bathing in a stream. They embrace each other, and another caresses a fish and thrusts it between her breasts. A second, similar scene adds a virile groom and a bantam cock to the film's range of Freudian imagery. The man and the girls reappear in later fantasies, carrying with them the connotation of positive and open sexuality. It is a model that contrasts with Valerie's apparent background of religious conformity. The theme of age living off youth

makes its appearance in the story of Hed-

vika, a friend of Valerie's, who is about to marry a rich but ageing farmer. While Valerie sympathizes with her situation, Grandmother can see only the financial advantages in the match. The vampiric nature of the relationship is made clear when both Grandmother and Tchoř appear on Hedvika's wedding night. The guests have gone, leaving only the debris of the night's meal. A shot of red wine spilling from an overturned glass of daisies provides a link with Valerie's own situation. Other images include a hand of playing cards and an empty white glove clutching an erect and half-smoked ci-





gar. When Hedvika and her husband embrace, Grandmother and Tchoř emerge from their places of hiding. Grandmother sinks her teeth into Hedvika's neck as Tchoř draws a black cloak over the scene. Valerie recoils from the scene in the safety of her own bed. Later, Hedvika is shown wandering, pale and depressed, and reveals that she has become the prey of a "vampire."

The role of the Catholic Church (organized religion as such) is shown as repressive and hypocritical, and is expressly linked to the vampiric manifestations of Valerie's elders. Initially, its values are expressed through the figure of Grandmother. She is severe, ordered, withdrawn and preoccupied with the Bible and her rosary. The rosary beads themselves become a recurrent and threatening visual motif that, in Elsa, are associated with the teeth of the vampire. Tchoř himself appears as a bishop, carried in procession by faceless black figures, and preaches a special sermon for maidens, in which he addresses them in lustful imagery.

The most explicit attack on religion, however, is reserved for the buffoon-like Father Gracian. Gracian has returned from far-off lands and is first seen leading a procession of nuns through a wheat field. When they walk toward the arbour where Valerie is watching, they avert their eyes from the sight of the groom making love to one of the village girls. Grandmother's interest in this particular missionary is explained by a scene in which in which Tchoř takes Valerie to a spyhole. Grandmother is lashing herself with a

whip as Gracian looks on, munching an apple.

At night, Gracian invades the security of Valerie's bedroom, carrying a lighted candle and wearing a necklace of teeth, the latter linking to Grandmother's necklace. Valerie escapes his attentions by swallowing her magic pearls but is made to atone for her sins later on. Gracian addresses a large crowd in the square, accusing her of witchcraft and of having rubbed her "fawning hips"

against

the early and the ingion, this

him. She is caught and tied to the stake by a group of jackbooted and leather-belted young men, stripped to the waist. When Gracian accuses her, Valerie laughs and escapes the flames through the use of her magic pearls.

Valerie's relationship with Tchoř is a matter of both fear and attraction. She is entirely willing to be enfolded in his cloak and taken to his magic underground kingdom, a kind of alchemist's

cellar rather closer to Roger Corman than to Jan Švankmajer. Later, when a fowl pest breaks out and Tchoř is threatened with death through lack of chicken blood, she kills a hen with her bare teeth and kisses him with blood-covered lips.

Tchoř is momentarily transformed into a handsome red-haired young man but soon returns to a laughing, white-faced and red-lipped Tchoř, who attempts to rape her. She cries out, and he lies with his white-gloved hands to his face as if he, too, is appalled by his actions. She grasps a cobweb and floats downward, out of frame as his massive, bald, tuft-eared head is raised and seen from be-

hind. At the end of the film, she again saves him during a confrontation during a party in his underground kingdom.

These generous and loving instincts are based on the assumption, or at least the possibility, that Tchoř may be her father. But when she saves him during the fowl pest, she receives a letter of farewell from Orlík: "This is goodbye. You left me and the monster violated your lips. He is neither your father nor mine. How happy we could have been. You prolonged his life. I wanted to be your protector, husband, friend."

The film is clearly most concerned with Valerie's recognition that her immediate family and friends are sexual beings (and that this sexuality may also be alternate and ambiguous) but also the masking of this sexuality by the repressive structures of religion and authority. The film also raises the issue of play versus ordered be-





haviour and accepted morality, art versus morality (or ideology), childhood versus adulthood.

In presenting the opposition between the arrival of actors and missionaries at an early stage in the film, Jireš provides a comment on the nature of his own project. Orlík, the artist and dreamer, is young, but the representatives of official morality are old, vicious and/or hypocritical. In linking art with youth, the film asserts the positive values of its own fantasy against those who would wish to deny them, those of Poetism against realism (including Socialist Realism). Undoubtedly opposed to the "official art" of the 1950s that was returning to bureaucratic favour at the time that the film was made, its qualities can best be summarized by Karel Teige's views on Poetism, the Czech precursor of Surrealism, in which he argued that art should be playful, mischievous, and fantastic: "Poetism seeks to turn life into a magnificent entertainment, an eccentric carnival, a harlequinade of feeling and imagination, and intoxicating film track, a marvellous kaleidoscope."

The film's conclusion apparently resolves the various contradictions of its characters and narrative only to throw them again into question. At the end of the film, Valerie sees her visions, now

friendly and reconciled, both to her and to each other. Together they sing the lullaby with which Orlík had previously quieted her fears:

Good night, my dear, Good night, sweet dreams. When you awake, Keep safe your secret.

While the film works to a precisely conceived aesthetic pattern, Jireš, like

Jacques Rivette and Věra Chytilová, allows the audience to construct its own meanings from what appears on the screen, to join in the fantasy, the play and the mischief. In his original story, Nezval deliberately drew on the serial novel, constructing short chapters that are full of action and unexpected reversals. This is maintained in the film and underlined by a constant change of shot and angle, often reminiscent of comic book narrative. The images as pure stills exert considerable power, and the photography of Jan Čuřík makes the most of a mix of rich colours, emphasizing textures and immersing the film in a wash of colourful imagery.

One should also mention the film's striking music score, by Lubo's Fiser, one of the country's leading contemporary composers who, like Zdenek Liska, has made a significant contribution to film music. In *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*, he uses a whole range of techniques, including choral sections and individual instruments (flute, harpsichord, harp, organ, guitar, bells). The music illustrates its individual themes with very little use of what one might call the "Hollywood dramatic." Single instruments often succeed each other in creating an evolving texture.

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders went little-noticed in international critical circles on its first release, although it did win Best Film at Bergamo. While it was



released in the United Kingdom, critics compared this tale of "lesbian vampires" unfavourably with Jireš's 1968 exposé of Stalinism in his adaptation of Milan Kundera's novel *The Joke*.

But the film has gradually acquired an underground following, not merely among horror film enthusiasts, but among those intoxicated by both its music and imagery. When its complete soundtrack was released on CD in 2006, Andy Votel noted that bands such as Espers, Broadcast and Circulus had all taken inspiration from its score, which had indirectly "trickled through the bloodline of many contemporary record collections." It is a film that has certainly found its audience and continues to resonate in ways that neither Jireš nor Nezval might have imagined.

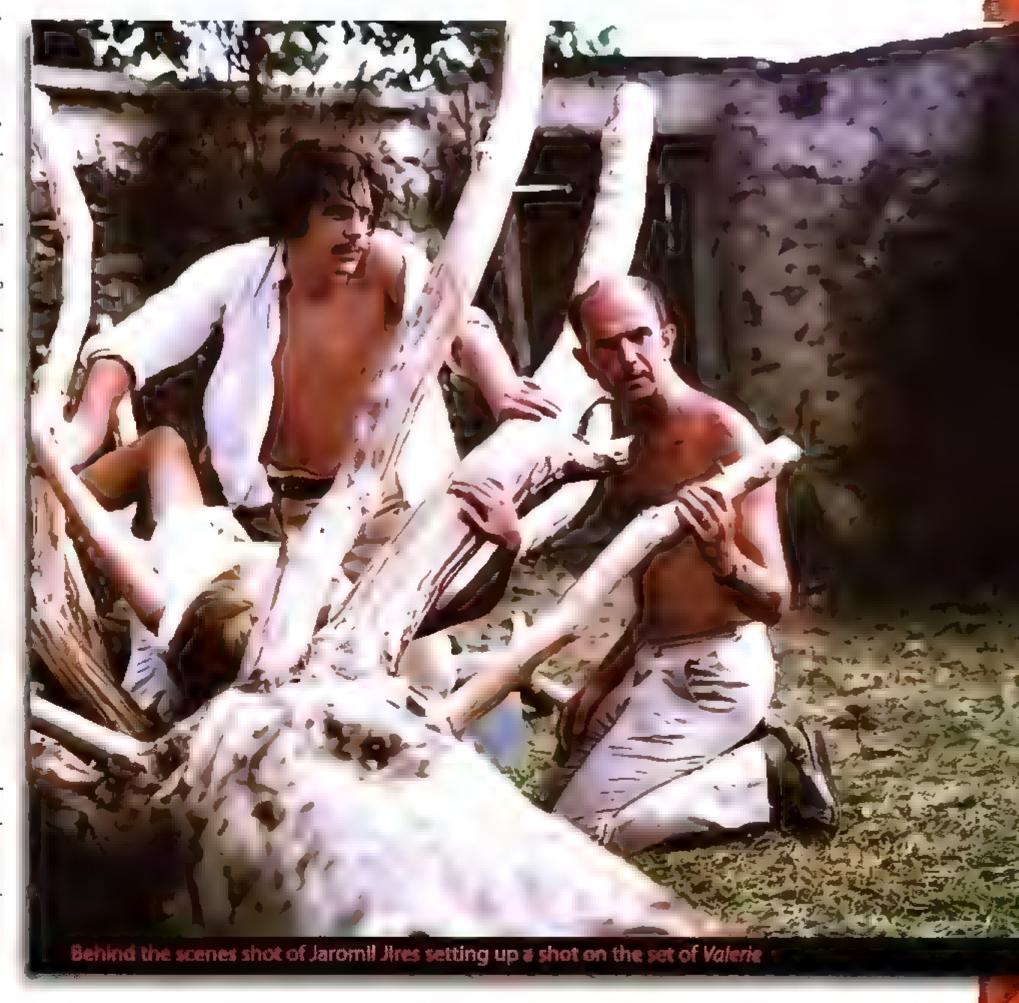
After Valerie

s one of the first directors of the Czech New Wave, and despite having made nothing else like Valerie and Her Week of Wonders, Jireš has made a significant contribution in other genres. Temperamentally attracted to the lyrical, his early films were resolutely experimental and consistently played with unorthodox narratives, interweaving different subjectivities (The Cry), a political dialogue between past and present (The Joke), and the alternative (day) dreams of Valerie.

After Valerie, like all of his generation, Jireš faced the choice between directing only subjects approved by the collaborationist regime or not making films at all. Choosing the former, the first of these was And Give My Love to the Swallows (...a pozdravuji vlaštovky, 1972), a story which he scripted himself, and which was based on the diaries of a Communist resistance heroine (although ironically, one whose relatives had supported the Prague Spring). The film starred Magda Vášáryová, who had earlier made her debut in František Vláčil's epic Marketa Lazarová. Working again with Jan Čuřík and Luboš Fišer, Jireš produced a film of extraordinary conviction and beauty. The complex interaction of past

and present, the use of the heroine's point of view and narrative of events mirrored the approach adopted in his earlier films.

He continued to make films during the "age of immobility," but the absence of substantive scripts sometimes condemned him to simple humanist slovak and British cinema in the sixties: the influence of Lindsay Anderson on the Czechs, the fact that Czech cinematographer Miroslav Ondříček worked on three of Anderson's films, Ken Loach's admiration for Loves of a Blonde and so on. Jireš was among those who welcomed



themes-although in this, he was no exception. In later years, his interest in music revealed itself in documentaries about Dvořák, Janáček and Martinů, as well as the only fiction feature film about Janáček, Lion with a White Mane (Lev s bílou hřívou, 1986). He worked again with Luboš Fišer on the television opera The Eternal Faust (Věčný Faust) in 1985 and also on two of his final films, the Germanmade Labyrinth (1991), with Maximilian Schell, and his adaptation of Jaroslav Havlíček's Helimadoe (1994). Jireš made his last film, A Double Role (Dvojrole), in 1999 and died in 2001 after complications following a road accident.

For those who imagine Czech and Slovak cinema as existing in isolation, it is worth recalling the links between Czecho-

Anderson to Prague in 1965, and he maintained links with him during the years of "normalisation." Cinema still crossed boundaries.

Jaroslava Schallerová, who made her debut as Valerie, did not become a major star but appeared in a number of films in the 1970s, including Karel Kachyňa's Love (Láska, 1973) and The Little Mermaid (Malá mořská vila, 1976). She was also in Miklós Jancsó's Agnus Dei (Egi Bárány, 1971) and the Polish-Czech Hotel Pacific (Zaklęte rewiry/Dvoji svět hotelu Pacifik, Janusz Majewski 1975). In 1980, she appeared in Jireš's Escapes Home (Útěky domů, 1980). Jireš made a television documentary about her in the 1990s.

by PETER HAMES





Peter Hames is Honorary Research Associate and former subject leader in Film and Media Studies at Staffordshire University and a programme advisor to the London Film Festival, His

books include The Czechoslovak New Wave (second edition, Wallflower Press, 2005, Czech translation, 2008, Polish translation, 2011) and Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition (Edinburgh University Press, 2009, paperback 2010), and as editor, The Cinema of Central Europe (Wallflower Press, 2004), and The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy (second edition, Wallflower Press, 2008). He recently contributed to Marketa Lazarová: Studie a dokumenty, edited by Petr Gajdošík (Casablanca Publishers, Prague, 2009) and is currently coediting, with Catherine Portuges, Cinemas in Transition (Temple University Press), a study of Central and Eastern European cinemas since 1989. His articles have appeared in Sight and Sound, Vertigo, KinoKultura and Kinoeye and he has been a

member of festival juries at Karlovy Vary, Bratislava, Plzeň, Sochi, and Ivanovo. He is a member of the editorial board of Studies in Eastern European Cinema.

This article was adapted from the chapter on Valerie and Her Week of Wonders in Peter Hames's The Czechoslovak New Wave (London: Wallflower Press, 2005). The quotations from Vítězslav Nezval are taken from Valerie and Her Week of Wonders, translated by David Short (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2005). David Wilson's review of the film appeared in Monthly Film Bulletin (May, 1971). Tanya Krzywinska's essay "Transgression, transformation, titillation: Jaromil Jireš's Valerie a týden divů (Valerie and Her Week of Wonders)" appeared in Kinoeye (September, 2003). Further material on Jires can be found in Antonin J. Liehm's Closely Watched Films: The Czechoslovak Experience (New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1974) and in Josef Škvorecký's All the Bright Young Men and Women: A Personal History of the Czech Cinema (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1971). The CD of the score of Valerie and Her Week of Wonders is available on Finders Keepers records (FKROO9CD).





UN DOLCE HORROR DI EROTISMO E DI PAURA



FANTASIE DI UNA TREDICENNE

REGIA: JAROMIL JIREŠ MUSICHE DI JAN KLUSÁK

TRATTO DA UN SUCCESSO LETTERARIO DI VÍTESLAV NEZLAV COLORE DELLA TELECOLOR DISTRIBUZIONE: I.R. METHEUS FILM

A SHOWCASE OF CREATIVES FROM THAT REALM OF HORBOR WHERE NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM

FIRST DISCOVERED BRIAN when my grandparents purchased a book of rock poster's from the 90's — I was 13. His contrast of bold and neutral colors, context of skulls, women, and youthful angsty rebellion are what first caught my eye. Since then Brian has been my all time favorite artist.

I got to know Brian through a MySpace friend request. Brian was personable and open. He was a nerd in a cool-kind-of-way before being a nerd had relatively become cool. He was real, especially about his work and as an artist it motivated me to say to myself "Yeah I really can do this".

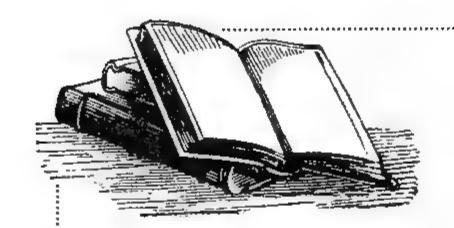
Currently residing in New York City's Lower East Side underbelly, Brian says everyday is a new discovery for him. "You can point weird things out everywhere and can discover great things and disgusting things every day. It's one of the things I draw influence from, always looking at New York with a fresh pair of eyes..."

READ THE REST OF DEVIN WHITMAN'S EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH INDIE NEW YORK COMIC AND POSTER ARTIST, BRIAN EWING, AND LOOK FOR A VIRTUAL EXHIBIT OF HIS WORK ON HORRORUNLIMITED.COM

artist brian ewing







LOAM Joan Eyles Johnson



"There's the blood and bone that would otherwise go to waste. "He had read that somewhere and marked it down somewhere else. He went to the cellar and poked around in the broken dresser in the corner, brushing aside the ugly spider in its powdery webs, and there among a few yellowed papers he found the recipe written by a farmer in Vermont on a torn page from Yankee Magazine.

"An 18- inch base of woodchips, a 6- inch layer of sawdust, a thin layer of fresh corn silage, or haylage, or horse manure, the animal, and then a cap of silage - 24 inches of material on all sides of the carcass. "He underlined the words animal and haylage. He had no idea what haylage is or where to find any, but this stuff would do nicely as the article said, "done correctly, with proper siting (away from the surface and ground water) and airflow, the process inactivates pathogens and produces a rich compost. " Well, if it works well for a full grown Holstein, think what it would do for a small dead woman. He waited until 3 am when even the playboy on the corner would have fallen into bed. He sucked in his stomach so as to breathe lightly, walked on the balls of his feet, crept to the corner of his back yard, and went behind the redwood fence he had constructed to contain his compost pile. All the necessary materials were there: silage, hay and woodchips, sawdust and his shovel. This would work despite the lack of haylage. He had substituted a twenty pound bag of bull manure for the fresh horseshit. It made sense. I don't know why nobody thought of this before, he wondered. It's so easy. I could be rid of anyone like this. I could

be king of the world, he thought. Like presidents and kings, I could be rid of anyone who doesn't work out. It took longer than he had anticipated, probably two hours of slow work because he had to be extra careful to be quiet. He resented the scraping of the shovel. Who would have thought how noisy it is to bury anything? Who realizes how loud breathing is? After working for a half hour, a jet taking its own sweet time groaned across the sky, lights twinkling like dirty stars, and then the pied pit bull two doors down barked for almost a minute, then once again it was as silent as the grave. And oh my God the woman wasn't so light anymore after a week's storage in his trunk. She smelled pretty nasty now.

In the morning, he whispered, I will grow this compost pile with banana peels, coffee grounds and lettuce leaves with a rich mix so potent even the neighbors will want to get in on it. That was it, he thought, his face heating up with a mix of exhaustion and excitement, I'll wrap up small burlap bags of the stuff when it is ready and give it as Christmas presents for the little old ladies who have given me so many unwanted gifts, burned slices of pie and homemade cookies with putrid green frosting, and that old foreigner who runs the feed store will get his for rudely dismissing me when I asked about haylage. He would, he knew, enjoy thinking of the weirdoes on the neighboring property chewing away on their homegrown carrots and peas and broccoli after the soil had been enriched with Betty Lou's essential essence. He would call his gift packages, "Betty Lou's Garden Soil." This thought made him laugh audibly. After being a goddam pain in the ass for twenty-eight years, Betty Lou would do the world some good after all. Having lived a rotten life, she would now become a continual blessing. An angel of bountiful nourishment. Maybe he would go into business with his rich magical mix. Feed stores would buy it by the bushel, little old ladies from church groups would buy it by the pound for their borders.

He sat in the kitchen as the sun came up over a big stein of beer. I can see it now, he thought, shiny silver -sided semi-trucks with her name looming large front, side and back hauling down the freeways at eighty miles an hour, and then the advertisements. He imagined it now, "Betty Lou's Garden Soil. Vegetable Magic" on TV during the Super Bowl. He tried to whistle a little tune for the theme behind the message. The money would roll in as the world was made better by the recipe from that old magazine Betty Lou had left lying about so long ago. What can one do with so much money, he wondered, sipping his sour beer. He was feeling the way a philosopher must feel with a brand new thought. What was more important to him now, ridding the world of boring, nagging, nuisances or making himself a millionaire like that Trump guy and attracting even more of them? Oh well, he decided, he would have to continue to do both if he wanted to be king of the world. Money comes from product and he would have to gear up to keep pretty doggone busy. At any rate, he knew for sure that he was on to something really really big.





OMPOSED OF A SCries of national cinemas (represented primarily by Russia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary), it the horror genre as a whole.

is a horror cinema marked by a strong reverence for the past, drawing from regional folklore associated with the supernatural, with a close eye on the political and social climates in which these films are made. A look at contemporary entries suggests that, distinct from "Euro-horror" itself, Eastern Europe's horror cinema is thriving and making its own unique contribution to Film scholar Steven Jay Schneider has defined "Euro-horror" as a "post-1970 horror cinema coming out of France, Spain, and Italy and, to a lesser extent,

Germany." Schneider goes on to state that "Eastern Europe, despite claiming such auteurs of dark fantasy and horror as Juraz Henry, Wojciech Has, Jan Svankmajer and Lucian Pintilie, seems somewhat outside the Euro-horror loop." Despite this, Schneider's description of Eurohorror can also be applied to the horror cinema of Eastern Europe, of how these films "each in their own idiosyncratic ways, manage to suggest through such elements as mise-en-scene, atmosphere, colour scheme and set design the existence of repressed desires, long-buried secrets and ominous dark powers lurking in the shadows."3 These suggest an approach to these films informed by psychoanalysis and its teachings regarding repression and the workings of the unconscious and subconscious minds. In a region where state censorship has historically proven daunting to filmmakers, the political and social turmoil surrounding the fall of Communism in the late twentieth century have often played out through the fantastical trappings of the horror film.

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was escalated by the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, and tensions increased following the Soviet Union's armed invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, which resulted in the boy-

cotting of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow by the United States and several other countries. The decade that followed witnessed the 1986 explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion in North-Central Ukraine along with a rapid series of leadership changes in the Soviet Union, with three different heads of state dying in office between 1977 and 1985 before Mikhail Gorbachev was elected in 1985. It was Gorbachev who participated in the processes of perestroika ("restructuring") and Glasnost ("openness"), signing an arms reduction treaty with the United States in 1987. The 1989 re-unification of Germany ended Soviet control of Eastern Europe and two years later, the Soviet Union collapsed, resulting in the formation of the Russian Republic, with fifteen republics signing a Federation treaty in 1992. The early 1990s would also witness the Soviet departure from Hungary and



Russia), a witchcraft tale based on the work of Russian novelist Nikolai Gogol and steeped in gothic atmosphere. A seminarian who exhibits more enthusiasm for vodka consumption than he does for his religious studies, Khoma encounters a hag-like woman, who is revealed to be a witch when she rides him through the





the division of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Prior to the turn of the century, perhaps the most well-known horror/fantasy film produced in Eastern Europe was, along with Jaromil Jires' Valerie and Her Week of Wonders (Valerie a tyden divu, 1970, Czechoslovakia), Viy (Konstantin Yershov and Georgi Kropachyov, 1967,

countryside and across the night sky.4 When Khoma manages to physically attack his tormentor, he is horrified to see that she has transformed into a beautiful young woman, the daughter of a rich local man. Khoma flees the scene and the young woman expires from her injuries, only for Khoma to be forced, due to his seminary training, to spend the necessary

three nights sealed away with his victim's corpse, saying the requisite prayers for her soul. Each night, the corpse comes to life and menaces Khoma, yet he remains protected through the drawing of a circle of safety. On the third night, lured by the promise of a lucrative cash reward from the grieving father, Khoma again encounters the reanimated corpse of the young woman, but this time she summons a host of nightmarish figures to assist her in claiming Khoma's soul.

With its bleak countryside setting



and reliance on folkloric elements, Viy very much resembles the gothic splendor of Mario Bava's Black Sabbath (1963, Italy) and Black Sunday (1960, Italy) as well the output of the UK's Hammer Films along with the adaptations of Edgar Allen Poe being produced by Roger Corman for American-International Pictures earlier in the decade. Viy has been called the first Soviet-era horror film made in the Soviet Union, and while created amid state censorship of the period, it managed to avoid many restrictions by presenting itself as fantasy in the form of a traditional folk tale. 5 A supernatural and, at times, psychedelic tale, one careening from comedy to horror on a regular basis and making use of gothic as well as folkloric imagery, Viy has come to be seen as one of the most iconic horror films produced in Eastern Europe, its influence being felt in many contemporary horror films from the region. The scene of Khoma being saddled and ridden by the hag is especially memorable, along with the final summoning of the monstrous creature known as Viy along with assorted indescribably bizarre and frightening hobgoblins which liter-

ally appear to crawl out of the woodwork to advance on Khoma.

Critics have noted that the film features as much of the comedic as it does the



horrific, applauding Leonid Kuravylov's performance as Khoma, as one writes: "His comic performance, and the lighthearted tone of these early scenes, can be misleading ... [the directors] plan on sucker-punching the audience by letting this gentle farce descend into total nightmare."6 Just how Viy descends into night-



mare, however, is what gives the film's last third its potency. Of the film's climax and the third night of Khoma's vigil, 100 European Horror Films observes: "By the final reel, all memories of the silly first part have given way to full-bore horror. The cinematic imagination on display during this awe-inspiring finale is truly shocking. These are images that owe nothing to earlier horror movies, and were never copied by followers."7 Indeed, these images were never completely replicated yet the onset of the 21st century has produced new images of horror in Eastern Europe.

Political and social transitions in the 21st century would seem a far cry from the fairy-tale setting of Viy. The late 1990s saw the formation of the European Monetary Union (EMU), while Hungary and

the Czech Republic joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. That same year saw a change in leadership, with Vladimir Putin elected as Russian Prime Minister by 71% of the vote; he would be succeeded in 2008 by Dmitry Medvedev. Russia was also the site of terrorist violence: in 2002, Chechen rebels seized a Moscow theater, demanding the immediate with drawal of Russian forces from Chechnya; the result was 162 casualties. A similarlymotivated crisis occurred two years later, when Chechen rebels stormed a school



in Beslan, with 385 dead at the end of the ordeal. Along with the events of the previous century and the Soviet occupation of both Hungary and Czechoslovakia, senseless violence is another nightmare haunting contemporary Eastern European horror cinema, along with the witches and vampires of supernatural folklore.

Contemporary Eastern Europe horror cinema has simultaneously referenced its past, both real and folkloric, diversifying and distinguishing its national output alongside the political and social upheavals occurring in Eastern Europe following the end of the Cold War and into the twenty-first century. Viy has been remade at least twice: needlessly modernized in a 2006 adaptation titled Vedma (The Witch), and in the form of a big-budget epic production directed by Oleg Stepchenko and written by Aleksandr Karpov with Stepchenko. Viy. Vozvrashchenie had been scheduled for a 2009 release, now pushed back to February 2012 as the result of a decision to remake the film in 3-D.8 Meanwhile, Timur Bekmambetov's Night Watch (Nochnoi Dozor, 2004, Russia), based on the dark fantasy trilogy by nov-



elist Sergei Lukyanenko, places itself in a more contemporary milieu, with vampires, witches, and other occult figures at large in the streets of modern Moscow, waging an ancient battle between competing forces of the underworld. Upon its release in Russia, the film (made for \$4 million) broke previous box office re-



cords: no prior film made in Russia had made over \$2 million, yet Night Watch grossed eight times that figure.9 The film received a limited release in the United States in early 2006 through Fox Searchlight and was also featured in numerous international film festivals.10

Of Bekambetov, an experienced and accomplished director of commercials











and music videos, Russian film producer Konstantin Ernst states: "I explained to him that I wanted to forge a new image and get to a new level in Russian movie making that would make it a real part of the international movie arena-not just art-houses or for festivals, but with exciting films that appeal to a mass audience. With Night Watch, we had that opportunity."" Making an emphatically Russian horror movie was appealing to the direc-

Tarantino, Ridley Scott, Roger Corman, and James Cameron," and found himself compelled by Night Watch's overlay of the mundane and the fantastical in a contemporary urban setting. Bekambetov notes: The story takes place in the real world of Russian life, but its [sic] also fantastical. So my idea was to make it feel as real as possible on the screen while also finding a context for the mystical and the fantastic in contemporary Moscow life." This tor, whose influences include Quentin | context proved stimulating for Bekam-

betov: "I started to think about how you could connect these things: Red Square and vampires, vampires and the Russian ballet ... One half of me is the filmmaker who loves vampires, Roger Corman and the other half of my men-The Matrix tality is a Russian reality where there are lots of problems." In this sense, Night Watch has played an important role not only in growing a post-Soviet Russian cinema capable of competing with Hollywood and the U.S. film industry, but also in creating new worlds of horror, set in urban landscapes and drawing upon contemporary anxieties yet retaining both the gothic and folkloric motifs of a film such as Viy in the form of vampires and witches unleashed in a modern-day city such as Moscow. By contrast, 2010's My Joy (a co-

production between production companies based in the Ukraine, Germany, and the Netherlands¹⁵), an entry in the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, takes horror out of the city and back to the countryside. Commercial truck driver Georgy (played by Viktor Nemets) is hauling a load of flour through the Russian interior, along the way giving a lift to a teenaged prostitute (Olga Shuvalova) who warns him about attempting a shortcut; Georgy, of course, ignores her warning and finds himself trapped in a nightmarish small town from which he cannot escape, in what critic Andrew O'Hehir refers to as a Russian edition of The Twilight Zone. O'Hehir goes on to note how director Sergei Loznitsa's "portrait of Russian existence is one of perpetual gloom punctuated with occasional outbursts of violence." In many ways, My Joy belongs to the "road horror" subgenre, one that horror scholar Finn Ballard describes as "blurring the aesthetic of the road movie with the tension and gore of horror



cinema,"18 and comprised of such American films as The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Tobe Hooper, 1974, USA) and Jeepers Creepers (Victor Salva, 2001, USA). At the same time, Loznitsa is able to imbue his film with his own perspective as a Russian filmmaker (having left Russia in 2001): O'Hehir observes that My Joy "appears to suggest that all the tyranny and brutality of the 20th century have left [Loznitsa's] homeland stupefied and morally denuded."19 The somber tone and look of the film (in part courtesy of cinematographer Oleg Mutu) yield a conclusion that is no less grim than viewers should expect, grounded in real-life horror found within the political and social context in which the film was conceived of and produced as post-Soviet horror cinema in the early 21st century.

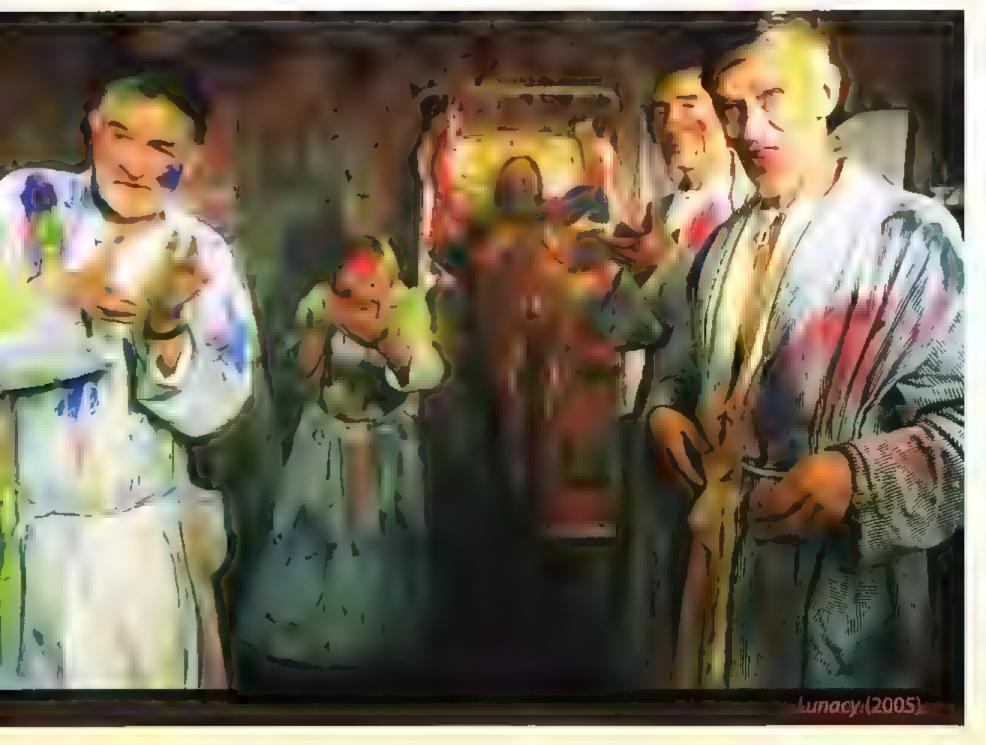
The Czech Republic has produced its own, if slightly smaller, share of nightmares in the new millennium. Jan Svankmajer's Lunacy (Sílení, 2005) demonstrates a continued reliance on the gothic, particularly the work of Edgar Allen Poe, while also making use of the real-life exploits of the Marquis de Sade. Svankmajer begins with these raw materials before providing his own interpretation, one that involves a decided emphasis on meat: one review noted that "we see porterhouse marionettes, disembodied tongues wrestling (or copulating) on an operating table, and meat bursting



out of the armpit of a statue, while tinny piano roll music plays."10 The film's actual plot involves the administration of an insane asylum: having befriended a marquis, young Jean Berlot finds himself inducted into his new companion's depraved rituals, including burying someone else alive and bearing witness to a black Mass. In the film's second half, Berlot attempts to rescue a young woman from a sanitarium where he has willingly committed himself, and the two work to set free the legitimate administrators and staff, whom the young woman claims have been imprisoned in the basement. Lunacy's strong point is not its plot but its surreal imagery, characteristic of director Svankmajer. Reviewers have advanced the film as a po-

litical parable of contemporary Eastern Europe, "with the Marquis representing the licentious excesses of democratic capitalism and the asylum's old guard representing the iron-fisted order imposed by the Communists." Svankmajer, however, has gone to great lengths to insist that is film is merely a horror film, lacking any greater political agenda, a disclaimer that many critics dismiss in favor of reading *Lunacy* as an allegory.²²

Meanwhile, the dark tone of Lunacy is countered by the Czech horror comedy Choking Hazard (Marek Dobes, 2004), involving not vampires, witches, or other traditional supernatural figures of folklore, but zombies. In this film, a group of protagonists isolate themselves at a mountain lodge in order to determine "the meaning of life." Their introspection is quickly besieged by zombies emerging from the woods, with no immediate rescue in sight. More serious but considerably shorter is Séance (Robin Kasparík, 2010), a short film directed by Kasparík, enrolled in the Film Director's course at Tomas Bata University in the Czech Republic,23 and featured at numerous film festivals, including the Dark Carnival Film Fest and South African Horrorfest, where it won Best Short Film²⁴ (it is also widely available online). It is not hard to see the influence of Viy (as well as the previously mentioned Mario Bava) on Séance, which despite its brief running time manages to feature a handful of effective scares and Kasparík makes effective use of atmosphere in creating an overwhelm-





ing sense of dread.

Reminiscent of the "Drop of Water" segment of Bava's Black Sabbath, Séance depicts the events following the death of a reclusive and infamous baroness, rumored to have dabbled in the occult. In the middle of the night, young fortune teller Marie (played by Klara Jandova) is summoned to the baroness decrepit castle by two men (Pavel Novy and Zdenek Julina) to whom the baroness owed money at her passing, one of them (the more menacing of the two), her doctor. Although the baroness died virtually penniless, the men know of the existence of a valuable necklace belonging to the deceased, and they have enlisted Marie's help in locating it. You see, Marie, in addition to being able to read fortunes, is also a gifted medium and capable of communicating with the dead. Although initially reluctant, Marie is convinced to cooperate through the offer of a

inancial reward. Both the film's opening and the atmosphere of the castle visually reference Viv. and folk belief surrounding witchcraft and the supernatural once again plays an important part in the tale that unfolds, along with a fear of the dead and rituals associated with dying. Having procured a lock of the dead woman's hair, the three commence their séance, held next to the laid-out corpse of the baroness.

A petrified Marie invites the spirit of the baroness into her body, but with the exception of one nasty little jump scare, there is little result. In short order, a gri-



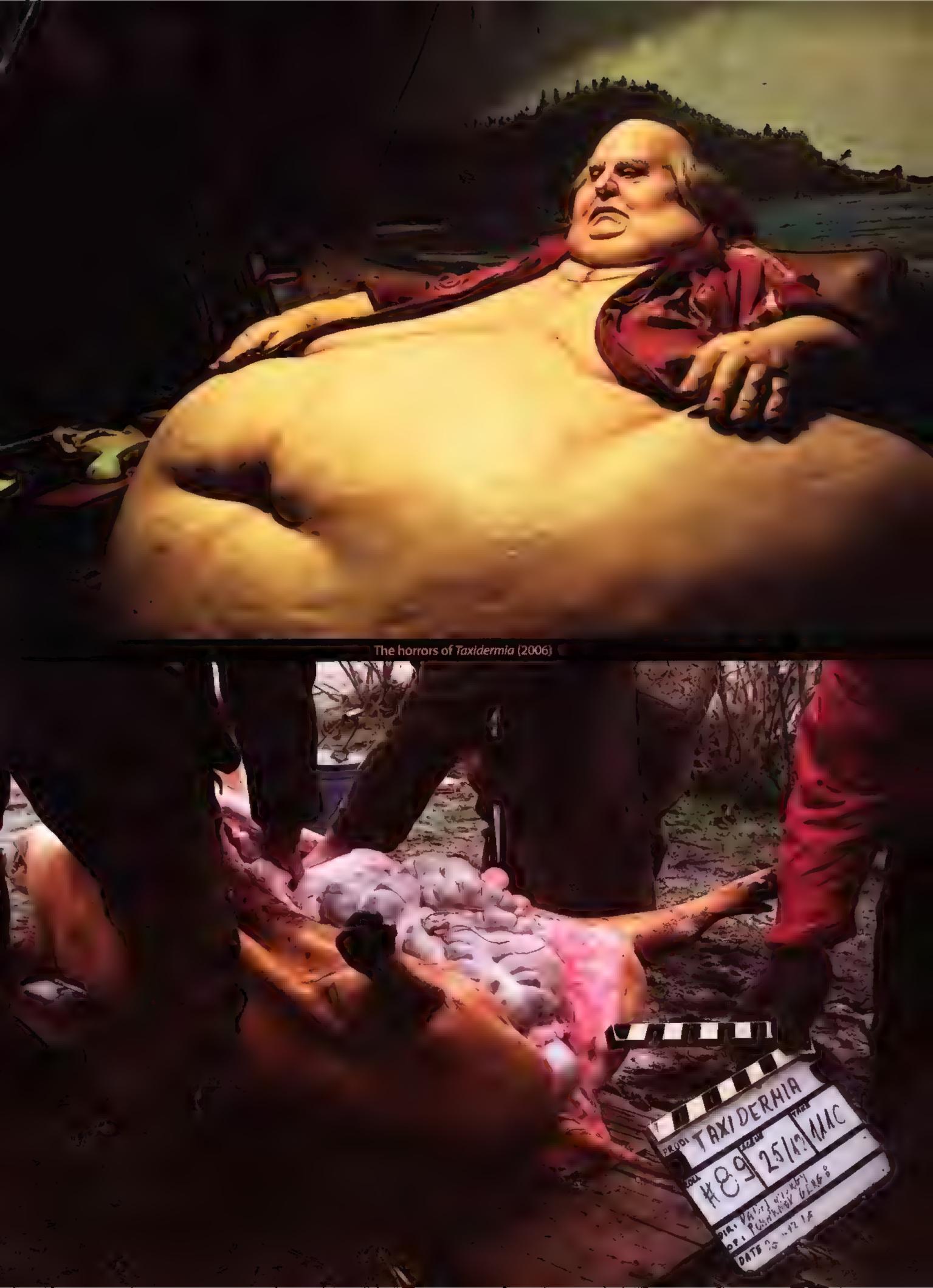
providing instruction in more arcane and dangerous forms of magic which the two men believe will lead them straight to the necklace. When one of the men refuses to take part in the dark ritual, his partner strikes him over the head, killing him. Not long after, the necklace is



indeed located: it is found in the mouth of the dead woman. However, Marie realizes they have been tricked: the baroness knew the two greedy men would search for the necklace, and she knew they would attempt to unleash her spirit. The reanimated corpse of the baroness (Marie Durnova) rises, killing the doctor and taking possession of Marie's youthful body, triumphantly resurrected. Viy's influence is inescapable in Séance, with Kasparik's film drawing much of its impact from its short length and skillful use of atmosphere and suspense.

Finally, Taxidermia (Gyorgy Pálfi, 2006, Hungary), which was entered in the 2006 Cannes Film Festival,2 may easily be the most shocking of the films gathered in this brief survey (and one owing more to director David Lynch rather than Roger Corman of Mario Bava). Likened by one critic as evocative of both the Grand Guignol and a psychedelic experience,26 Taxidermia suggests that horror is generational. The film, based on the short stories of Lajos Parti Nagy concerns three generations of Hungarian males. During World War II, Morosgovanyi Vendel (Csaba Czene) is working as a military orderly, engaging in an extensive and bizarre fantasy life (generating some of Taxidermia's most surreal imagery, including a scene in which Vendel sodomizes a slaughtered pig). He also sleeps with and impregnates the wife of his lieutenant, who has him executed and then raises the resulting child as his own, 'That child,





Kálmán (Gergely Trócsányi), grows up to be a champion speed-eater, falling in love with Gizi, another speed-eater, and siring a son of his own, Lajoska (Marc Bischoff).

It is Lajoska who works as a taxidermist, bearing a cadaverous appearance in comparison to his severely overweight father. Lajoska looks after his father, who has grown so large that he cannot get out of his chair much less his apartment, where he keeps cats in cages. A falling-out between the two leads Lajoska to abandon his father, failing to show up to feed the cats. These cats, in turn, escape their cages and driven by extreme hunger, devour Lajoska's incapacitated father, the former speed eater. In response, Lajoska puts his taxidermy skills to use on both his father and the marauding cats before slowly removing his internal organs and transforming himself into the ultimate work of taxidermy, then arranges for himself to be decapitated using a machine rigged for that purpose. Three generations of the grotesque (and Taxidermia) conclude with Lajoska's preserved form on display alongside that of his father and the cats, a grim tableau of generational horror based in the body.

Critics have referred to *Taxidermia* as "a bizarre tale about the hell of menial existence and the doom we inherit from our predecessors," "a devious little nightmare," and "a disturbed and disturbing fairy tale." Given its emphasis on the body and excessive states, *Taxidermia* has been likened to the "body horror" 29

of directors such as David Cronenberg, and it is director Pálfi's embrace of excess that will very likely make the film difficult viewing even for the most hardy of horror aficionados. Throughout Taxidermia, the body (be it human or animal) remains central in how the film generates its horror, emanating not only from individual bodies but from bodies linked together through heredity and the generational succession of the family. In his review, Ed Gonzalez of the Village Voice writes that "Pálfi's crudely bombastic but impressive philosophical view of the body as landscape and art as a source of personal discovery, wonder, and annihilation."30 Of all the films included in this survey, Taxidermia represents perhaps the most definitive break from the gothic and folkloric motifs that abound in other films comprising Eastern European horror cinema. In Taxidermia, there is need for neither witches nor vampires, for the body is nightmare enough.

Belonging to a series of national cinemas making up the horror cinema of Eastern Europe and distinct from the larger category of "Euro-horror," each of these films contributes to the creation of a cinema that, in crafting horror, draws upon the history and folklore of the regions in which they are produced. Traditional tales of the supernatural in the form of witches and vampires have informed literary adaptations such as *Viy* and *Séance* while also functioning to create new visions of horror in a film such

as Night Watch. My Joy and Taxidermia blend Eastern European history and concerns with the road-horror and body horror subgenres, respectively, while Choking Hazard attempts (with decided success) to hybridize the zombie subgenre with the comedy, much in the style of Shaun of the Dead (Edgar Wright, 2004, UK). Even Lunacy, which is emphatically presented by its director as merely a Poe adaptation, devoid of commentary or agenda, makes use of the brutal history associated with Eastern Europe and can be read as an allegory for the current political climate. Having produced these diverse and notable films in the first decade of the 21st century, it remains to be seen what new nightmares will trouble the horror cinema of Eastern Europe in the years to come.

by DREW BEARD





Drew Beard is a Ph.D candidate in English at the University of Oregon, where he is completing his dissertation, investigating manifestations and negotiations of family trauma in paranormal

reality television. He has contributed to Scope, GLQ, and the Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies, and is currently coediting a collection of essays, Where Horror Dwells: Locating Horror across Media Landscapes.

- 1 Steven Jay Schneider, "Notes on the Relevance to Psychoanalytic Theory to Euro-horror Cinema," in The Couch and the Silver Screen: Psychoanalytic Reflections on European Cinema, ed. Andrea Sabbadini (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 119.
 - 2 Schneider, 120
 - 3 Ibid., 122.
- 4 Baba Yaga is a particularly visible manifestation of the witch in Russian folklore, where she lives in the Siberian forest in a house standing on chicken legs. The vampire also figures heavily in Eastern European folklore.
- 5 The Scarecrow Movie Guide (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2004), 367
- 6 100 European Horror Films, ed. Steven Jay Schneider (London: BFI, 2007), 225.
 - 7 Ibid., 226
- 8 "Viy and Avatar: common features?" Russian Film Group, last modified October 20, 2009, accessed September 8, 2011, http://www.russianfilmgroup.com/news69.htm
- 9 Emmanuel Levy, "Night Watch: Russia's Block-buster Fantasy-Horror," accessed July 11, 2011, http://www.emanuellevy.com/comment/night-watch-russias-blockbuster-fantasy-horror-1/.
 - 10 "Night Watch," Internet Movie Database, ac-

- cessed September 11, 2011, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0403358/.
 - 11 Levy
 - 12 Ibid.13 Ibid.
 - 14 Ibid.
- 15 "Schastye Moe (My Joy)," festival-cannes. com, Cannes Film Festival, accessed September 11, 2011, http://www.festival-cannes.com/en/archives/ficheFilm/id/11023106/year/2010.html
- Andrew O'Hehir, "Best of Cannes: Russian horror movie 'My Joy," Film Salon, last modified May 22, 2010, accessed July 11, 2011, http://www.salon.com/entertainment/movies/film_salon/2010/05/22/my_joy.
 - 17 O'Hehir
- 18 Finn Ballard, "No Trespassing: The Post-Millennial Road Horror Movie," The *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 4 (2008), accessed September 11, 2011, http://trishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com/roadhorror.html
 - 19 O'Hehir
- 20 G. Smaltey, "List Candidate: Lunacy," 366 Weird Movies, last modified July 11, 2011, accessed September 11, 2011, http://366weirdmovies.com/list-candidate-lunacy-sileni 2005.
 - 21 Ibid.

- 22 Ibid,
- 23 Dead Harvey, "A Look at Robin Kasparik's Short Film 'Séance," Dead Harvey, last modified August 25, 2010, accessed September 12, 2011, http://deadharvey.blogspot.com/2010/08/look-at-robin-kaspariks-short-film.html.
 - 24 Ibid,
- 25 "Festival de Cannes: Taxidermia," festivalcannes.com, accessed September 11, 2011, http://www. festival-cannes.com/en/archives/ficheFilm/id/4338062/ year/2006.html.
- 26 "Taxidermia (2010)," All Horror Movies, accessed July 11, 2011, http://www.allhorrormovies.com/taxidermia-2010.html,
- 27 Matthew Sorrento, "Taxidermia," Film Threat, last modified May 10, 2007, accessed September 11, 2011, http://www.filmthreat.com/reviews/10018/.
- 28 "Taxidermia (2006)," Film4.com, accessed September 12, 2011, http://www.film4.com/reviews/2006/taxidermia.
 - 29 Sorrento
- 30 Ed Gonzalez, "György Pálfi's Batshit Crazy *Taxidermia*," The *Village Voice*, August 11, 2009, accessed September 11, 2011, http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-08-11/film/gy-ouml-rgy-p-aacute-lfi-s-batshit-crazy-taxidermia/.

TOR KNOK'S TOISSECTION TABLE. Our own David L Rattigan takes a scalpel to a scene from Hammer's Mocata, having entered the house under the auspices of re-

1968 occult thriller The Devil Rides Out turning the Duc's motor car, begins

Choosing just one scene from The Devil Rides Out for dissection is a formidable exercise, for the film is chock-full of masterfully executed sequences, scripted, directed and edited with impressive precision—the Duc and Rex's arrival at Simon's house to discover a meeting of a Satanic circle is about to take place, the orgiastic rites in the forest, the ritual battle against the forces of evil in the library. But I'm settling on the sequence in which, in the absence of the Duc de Richleau, Mocata manipulates his way into the Eaton household, trying—and almost succeeding—in abducting his young protégés, Simon and Tanith.

Dennis Wheatley described Mocata, the central villain of his 1934 novel, as "a fleshy, moon-faced man" and a "bald man" who "lisped with unsmiling eyes." But it's perhaps no surprise that when Terence Fisher took on the movie adaptation, his Mocata was a far more handsome and refined specimen than Wheatley envisaged. Like Fisher's Count Dracula a decade earlier, Mocata (played by Charles Gray, whom Fisher cast himself) embodies the "charm of evil," with a superficial, dashing attractiveness masking the malevolent, feral creature beneath.

The sequence begins as the camera pans right to follow De Richleau's exit from the grounds, revealing his own car, a Rolls Royce, which he left behind at the previous night's Satanic ritual, waiting "in the wings" to make its entrance. At its wheel is Mocata.

He pulls up directly to the front doorway of the Eaton house and, in a curious touch not found in Richard Matheson's shooting script,

gets out of the car and nonchalantly leaves the door wide open. Why? Perhaps because he can. He can do what he wants for, as we'll soon see, he loves control.

enquiring after Simon and Tanith.

Marie nervously plays with her child's

Mocata pushes her for informa-

a wonderfully cool manner that veers

between charm and sneering arro-

gance. He is a man who expects to get

Marie remains detached until

She rises, apparently wise to his

Bernard's music comes back at

hand still clutching the doll, the other

reaching out to touch the back of the

couch, fingers outstretched, almost

reminiscent of the iconic shot of Janet

Leigh stretching out her hand

scheme and intent on halting his at-

tempt to control her. But as she gets

doll as he speaks. From the wide shot of the room, we go to a series of more There's no mistaking Mocata's intimate reverse shots, first of Marie, nefarious intentions at this point, as seen over Mocata's shoulder, and then James Bernard's typically dramatic Mocata, seen from behind Marie. underscoring leaves nothing to interpretation. Rightly, however, the music tion on his disciples' whereabouts, in ceases as Mocata arrives at the house, and Malin, the Eatons' servant (Russell Waters), answers the door. This leaves much of the following scene to play out in discomfiting silence.

his own way. Charles Gray's smooth tones are particularly suited to the After a back-and-forth of inpurposes unfolding. decision, Mrs (Marie) Eaton (Sarah Lawson) tells Malin to allow Mo-Mocata attempts to win her over with cata in, despite having been warned flattery: "However, your obvious intelagainst him. And this dapper gentleligence emboldens me to think that I man, sporting an elegant red carnation can serve my purpose best by putting on his lapel, enters with great charm, all my cards on the table." Seen only extending his hand and announcing, from behind, Marie's head rises at this "I'm here on an errand of goodwill." mention of her "obvious intelligence." Interestingly, handshakes and other gestures of physical touching are often an early step of hypnosis, known as "induction." But Marie, still cautious, refuses to take his hand.

up and walks towards the camera, Mocata's tone of voice switches, as he says, Vampires cannot enter a house "Please... dear lady. Hear me out." uninvited, and it's with a certain vampiric quality that Mocata asks for perthis point, and we now see Marie and mission to go through to the library. him through, and here Mocata's at- Mocata, alternately, in medium shot. Already becoming mesmerized, Marie backs slowly towards the couch, tempt to manipulate her can begin in eventually slumping to the seat and full. Fisher's camera quite literally sets striking a wonderfully vivid pose, one the stage with a theatrical wide shot of the room, with Marie on the couch to the left separated by some distance from Mocata, in an armchair to the right. As Mocata gains control, the camera will subtly move ever closer, binding the two.

in Hitchcock's Psycho (1960) shower. Mocata begins his monologue,

in which he convinces Marie that just as will is "merely the power of mind over matter or, in the greater number of cases, the power of mind over mind," so her mind is "succumbing now to mine." Now the camera is zooming in slowly on Marie, while in the reverse shots of Mocata, it has moved from a medium close-up to close-up. We are now intimately bound up in Mocata's web of control over Marie. The transition to this point has been exquisitely paced. As he comes to his pivotal question-Where are Simon and Tanith?—both Mocata and Maria are seen in extreme close-up, with Mocata leaning into the camera. The focus on the eyes is a common Hammer motif, but it works particularly well here because it's not blithely applied in gimmicky fashion; rather the editing and photography (by studio stalwarts Spencer Reeve and Arthur Grant, respectively) have progressed carefully to this point.

Each time the camera moves in closer and Bernard's cadences rise, we feel the height of tension has been onds. reached, only for it to continue its crescendo. Finally, on finding out that Simon and Tanith are upstairs, guarded

angry Mocata in his seat and Marie

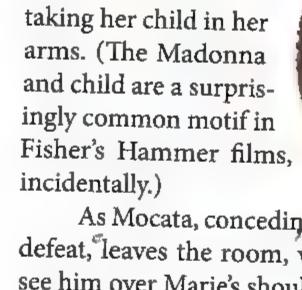




respectively by Richard and Rex, we get an extreme high-angle shot from above Mocata's chair. He turns his head upwards and, to startling effect, stares directly into the lens as the camera zooms in on his eyes.

From there we cut to a series of medium close-ups of Tanith and Simon as they, under Mocata's supernatural influence, wake to kill their guardians. Suddenly, as Tanith is about to put a knife into Rex's chest and Richard is about to die in Simon's stranglehold, the camera cuts to Richard and Marie's daughter, Peggy, as she opens the door to the library and interrupts the chain of events. She appears to be in search of her doll, the very thing her mother holds and which, it now turns out, is her saviour. The music fades, and so does the tension as a series of quick cuts between Mocata, turning round furiously; Marie, as she snaps out of the trance and puts her hand to her head, horrified; Tanith, as she drops the knife; and Simon, as he releases his hold on Richard and slumps back into the bed, asleep. The brilliantly constructed tension is dissipated in sec-

We cut to the library, and the shot is back to a wide angle again, with an



rushing to pull the bell

to alert Malin before

As Mocata, conceding defeat, leaves the room, we see him over Marie's shoulder, giving the ominous warning: "I won't be back—but something will."

We watch him leave from Tanith's point-of-view, from the bedroom window. He walks briskly, swinging his cane by his side in a manner that suggests irritation. The master manipulator did not get his way. Fisher does not forget about the open car door. Like a spoiled child, Mocata slams it shut on his way past.

An exhilarating sequence, delicately crafted and perfectly bookended by the entrance and exit of Mocata. But the director will not allow the tension to drop completely. Mocata has left the Eaton household, but his eerie promise keeps the suspense alive: Something will be back.













Kevin Smith is no stranger to controversy, his body of films, writing and podcasting frequently abandoning all pretences of good taste, and using humour to beat 'society's values' into submission. His latest feature, Red State, is his first non-comedy feature film, tackling horror for the first time, in a picture which has generated acres of coverage through his unique marketing strategy more than the actual content.

dle distribution himself, touring the United States and showing the film to audiences at \$55 a ticket. It was a plan Robert Pratten suggested (in 'Pervasive Horror Entertainment, Diabolique #4) at least guaranteed audiences an exclusive, immediate and prestigious experience—three qualities difficult or impossible to pirate.

Our original hope for this issue was to talk with Smith directly to discuss his strategy. Following his initial announcement, however, he made clear via his websites that he wouldn't be up for interviews on the film, saving that for the interactive road show. It was a bold move, which probably ensured some of the negativity that certain sections of the media threw his way.

I mention this at the off because it strikes me as important, rather against the grain and against common sense. *Diabolique*, like many other zines, will en-

gage in a little exchange with PR companies, who may provide imagery, permissions, and access to interview subjects in exchange for coverage in the magazine or website. I believe we should be honest about our dealings with these people, and also we should never dishonestly laud a project simply because we've been promised access. And yet its exactly what the PR companies and industry expect us to do-bend over to justify their expense accounts. By removing himself from the hands of the PR companies Smith, in theory, allowed punters to make up their own mind. Of course, some people will still praise the film because of who made it, and some of the press will tear it to shreds just because Smith and team didn't provide them with those all important interview column inches.

At Diabolique, we are deeply interested in the changing face of horror and the industry transitions going on around us. We want to know why filmmakers and writers are operating in their particular commercial sphere and how anyone

out there is able to make money when more and more material is being lifted

out there is able to make money when more and more material is being lifted into the 'free' market via illegal downloads, file-sharing sites and so on. You'll have noticed the 'independent' and 'alternative' strategies are a regular thread in this magazine

Once the experiment has reached its conclusion, if Mr. Smith would like to shoot the shit with us at some stage, we'd love to talk to him about the process and reaction. For now, some observations on the whole hoo-ha.

In retrospect, it is hard to fairly judge the scene following Red State's screening at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2011, with Smith originally due to auction the distribution rights, and instead withdrawing that privilege and awarding himself the exclusive rights. So much has been written subsequently that it is now impossible to judge how sincere Smith was with his original suggestion. Was he always going to self-distribute? Was the whole thing just an elaborate publicity ruse? Certainly it stirred up enough conversation to ensure that nine months later the incident is still cited in every piece about the film.

It doesn't matter that Smith got up after the Sundance screening and offered himself the rights for \$20, or that he stirred up a lot of negative press from the industry, bloggers and fans alike as a





result. What matters is that Smith tried to do something refreshingly different in terms of film marketing and distribution. Whilst perhaps not a Spielberg or Tarantino, Smith is a well-known Hollywood film director with a great deal of clout. Without even trying, Smith should have a certain fanbase ready to devour his latest offerings. It also shouldn't be too difficult to get a distribution deal set up (although as Smith has said, even his old friends the Weinsteins rejected the picture before he went to Sundance). And yet Red State would not find its market through a big distributor; instead Smith toured audiences willing to pay a premium ticket price for the privilege of seeing the film a little ahead of time and with the director present.

Many genre films have a life of this sort (albeit without the premium ticket pricing), effectively touring for anything between a few months and a couple of years, via the festival circuit. I've seen films turn up at various festivals, with publicity spreading via word of mouth and the genre presses, eventually finding a wider audience on DVD when a distributor catches the buzz about the picture and brings it to a commercial market. For the low-budget filmmaker, there is probably little choice. Getting your film noticed is difficult on an already saturated market, and the endless self-promotion can either break you or give you a false sense of your own brilliance.

For fans of the horror genre, Smith's



approach isn't too far removed from the way they absorb their cinematic treats anyway. The film becomes an experience rather than a piece of disposable entertainment. Think of those screenings you've been to where there has been a live musical accompaniment, a director Q&A or, as with *Birdemic*, you're waving your coat-hanger in the air along with the rest of them. Whether a newer talent would be able to find the same success is another question entirely.

Ever since the first announcement of the Red State tour, I've been prompted to think about the lengths that director Robin Hardy had to go to to find himself an audience in America for The Wicker Man. Star Christopher Lee accompanied him on a tour of the US with the film, playing in all manner of venues and doing a lot of radio/television PR (the most recent DVD editions have a few examples of the sort of thing they did). Lee has commented ever since that he worked for Hardy for free on the tour because he believed in the film so much, and in time, Wicker Man picked up the audience it rightly deserved. While we talk about Smith's approach being refreshing, it is also nothing new.

At the end of the day, he becomes the face of the project, the spokesperson, and his conviction in the project should allow an audience to follow through.

In the midst of the continuing coverage of his breaking from the studios, Red State has made its way to pay-per-



view television and home video on both sides of the Atlantic, and the alternative distribution methods are soon forgotten. And while Smith and SModcast Pictures promise that in future they'll be open to others shunned by the studio system, we can't help but wonder if Smith can find his replacement. At any rate, Smith is suggesting he will retire from directing after his next project from—and just when he seems to be pushing the right buttons again, antagonising middle America with his horrific narrative inspired by brushes with Catholicism and Fundamentalist Christianity (drawn in part from the

Westboro Baptist Church group). Cinema Blend's Katy Rich suggested Red State was more of a typical Kevin Smith movie than a horror, because of the endless talking—something different from the usual Hollywood fare then?

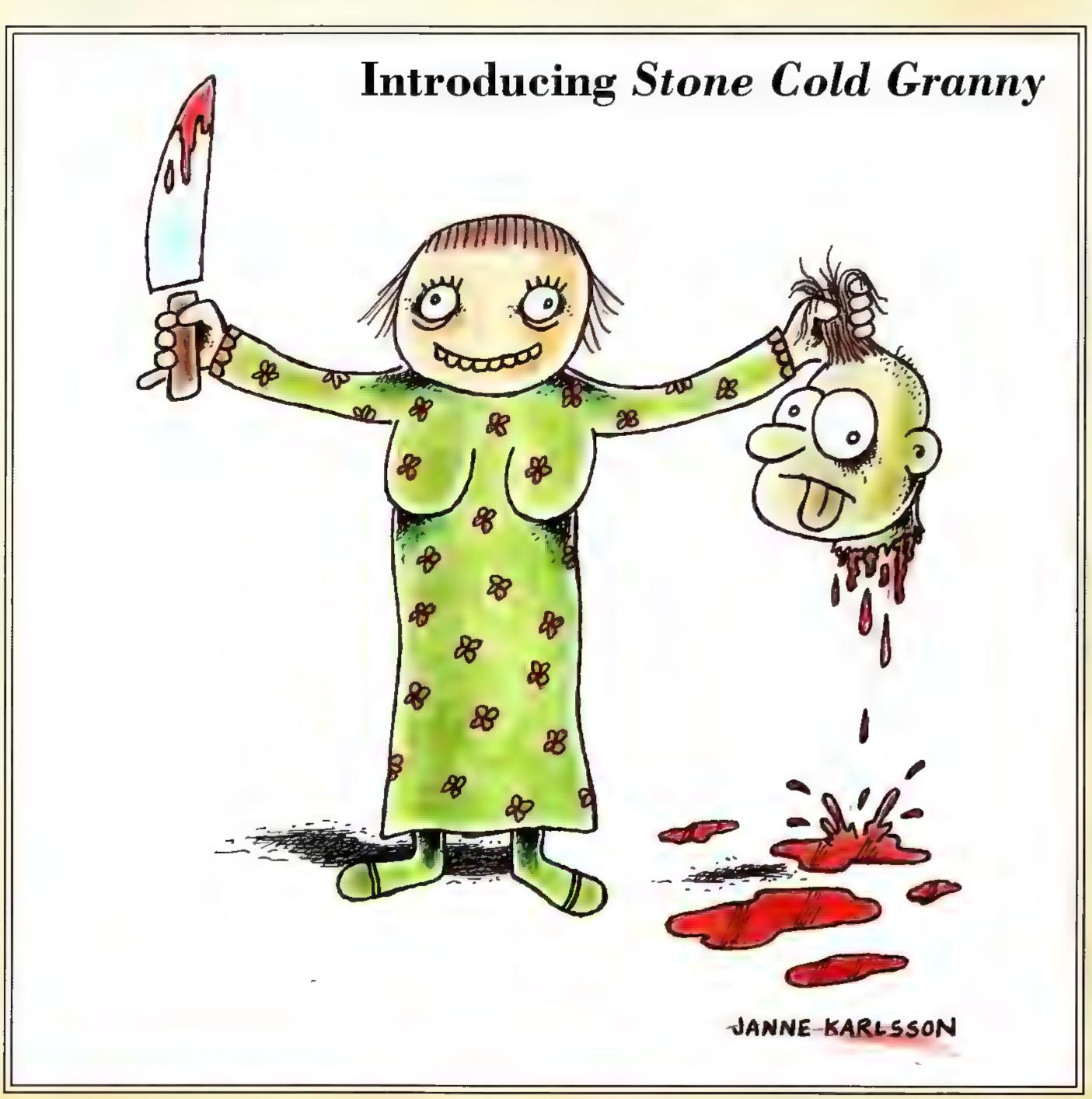
Despite the lack of cooperation from the UK contacts for the film, I'm still intrigued by the entire campaign. And despite his 'independent' line, ultimately the film is in the hands of certain distributors, and the publicity machine itself has never really stopped working.

by ROBERT J.E. SIMPSON



Robert J.E. Simpson is a film historian, writer and broadcaster based in Belfast. He is editor of Diabolique magazine and can be emalied at robert@horrorunlimited.com. His personal website is at www.avalard.co.uk.





Jerzy Skolimowski's

Deep End is not a horror film—but it is one of the most disturbing, shocking, unsettling and, indeed, horrifying films ever made. Now 41 years old, it has recently been rediscovered and partially resurrected. It is the work of a major director, Jerzy Skolimowski, iconoclastic, multitalented and idiosyncratic, and who is also virtually unknown.

KOLIMOWSKI MADE MORE than 20 films in various countries and languages, but none of them is available in any video format in the United States [The BFI have recently re-released it in a beautiful HD print, and it is now available on Blu-ray and DVD through their Flipside range in the UK, -Ed]. Deep End was his first film in the English language. The script was written in Polish, filmed mostly in Germany with a crew and supporting actors that were mostly German, and yet it seems to be a quintessentially English film.

Made in 1970, the film is set in the swinging London and Carnaby Street, which Mike Myers would parody in Austin Powers. Deep End is not Austin Powers or Blow-up, but the film has more to it than either. It does have as its subtext the changing sexual mores and subsequent

confusion of its time. But the impact of the film is as strong today as it was 40 years ago because Skolimowski is more interested in deeper psychological themes than in sociological observations.

On the surface, Deep End is a variation on the coming-of-age film. It starts lightheartedly with 15-year-old Mike getting his first job at a beginning-to-getrun-down London public bathhouse. The pre-Harold and Maude Cat Stevens canned soundtrack combines the thrill of getting a job but also death ('But I Might Die Tonight'). He goes to his interview and meets his supervisor, the very attractive Susan, who shows him the ropes. But Mike is an observer. He observes his physical training teacher paddling the asses of teenage girls and becomes confused by Susan's telling him how he can get tips—he is supposed to be attendant to men, she to women, but she tells him occasionally they switch in order to get

more tips

As Susan shows Mike the ropes, he becomes increasingly fascinated by his beautiful teacher. She toys with Mike, and they have wonderful bantering moments together, such as when she puts over him a strange poster of a pregnant man (which was from an actual British Government campaign). It only adds to his sexual confusion. In the process, though, Mike grows from being attracted to Susan to becoming obsessed with her. He discovers that she has both a lover (his married physical training teacher) and a fiancé, and she may be a stripper and/ or a prostitute. At this point, what had been playful has become obsessive. He follows her and her fiancé into a porn movie house, and he molests her. Later, he wanders into the club red-light district and finds what he thinks is a cardboard poster of her, which he steals, then goes back to the pool, where he dry-humps



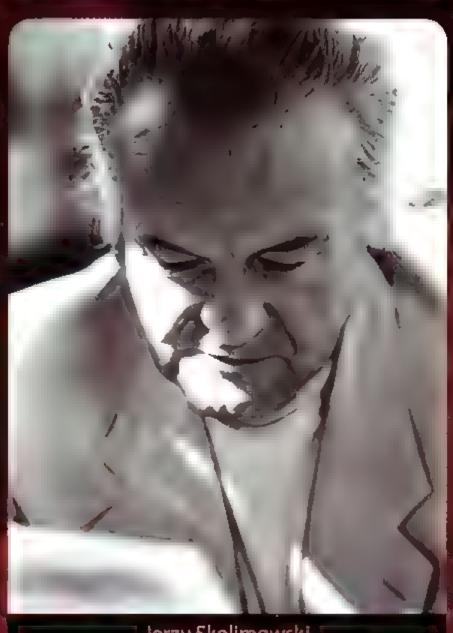






the poster in the water.

In his efforts to dissuade her from her engagement, he causes her to lose her diamond ring in the snow. They go to the pool to melt the snow in order to find it. When he does find it, he puts it in his mouth and shows it to her on the end of his tongue. It fits with the playfully erotic nature of their relationship all along. She disrobes in order to make love to Mike and bring him into manhood. At that point the pool is beginning to fill. He fails but wants to try again. She starts to leave, and he tries to stop her by sending one of the heavy brass lanterns at her which strikes her in the head. She pauses, she bleeds, slowly dies, and he makes love to her corpse in the newly



Jerzy Skolimowski

filled pool. Dry humping and necrophilia are not usual elements in your standard coming-of-age story. Audiences leave the theater in stunned disbelief.

To better grasp the significance of the impact of the event, we need to know about this relatively unknown filmmaker. Born in 1938, Skolimowski didn't come readily to film. He was a boxer, a sometime-painter and a Beat-influenced poet, who published two collections of his poems. He came to the attention of Andrzej Wajda, the dean of Polish cinema, whose films Kanal, Ashes and Diamonds and Man of Iron received international attention. His early films were political allegories, and when Poland became liberated from Communist rule, his political beliefs



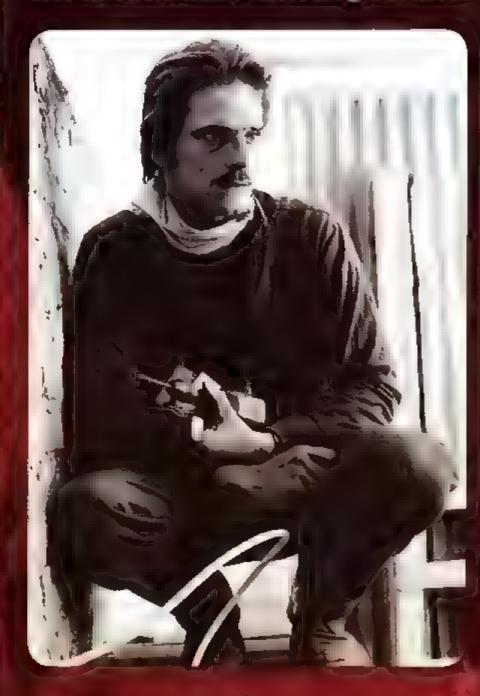
Jerzy Skolimowski's Rece do Góry (1967)

became more strident. Skolimowski was also leftist. Wajda became his mentor and helped him get into the prestigious film school in Lodz, of which Roman Polanski was a graduate. He got to know and encouraged Skolimowski, who wrote the script for his first feature film, Knife in the Water (1962); its themes would play out in the future work of both filmmakers. In Knife in the Water, Skolimowski first explores a triangular relationship between a younger and older man over a highly sexualized woman somewhere between the ages of both men.

Skolimowski's early films were leftist, anti-Communist and anti-Stalinist, which led to one of his films being banned in Poland, He then fled Poland so he could have more artistic freedom and became involved with the French New Wave filmmakers, making a somewhat absurdist, surreal comedy-drama starring Jean-Pierre Leaud. He then relocated to England, where he wrote the script for Deep End. He penned it in Polish, got a translator, and then proceeded to make the film mostly in Munich, Germany where the interiors were shot (with the exteriors shot in London). This crew was German with some Polish helpers and some German actors, whose voices were dubbed. In watching Deep End, little of this is apparent. Star Jane Asher claims that the multicultural production and the director's lack of familiarity with the language contribute to the somewhat surreal

quality of the dialogue, which fits in with some of the surreal visual moments in the film, such as Mike's slow motion fantasy of a naked Susan swimming in the water.

The eclectic feel of *Deep End* is appropriate for a director like Skolimowski, and it is natural that his films would be fraught with ambiguity. Nothing is certain. Is Susan a prostitute or not? Is she engaged or not? But it manifests itself more stylistically. Is the film a psychological thriller or an absurdist comedy? And the unsettling quality of the film is not to know what to make of the tone of the film or the characters. We simply never know. Skolimowski has trod this turf in other films, including his most





well-known film, the London-set Moonlighting, which was a breakthrough film for a young Jeremy Irons, who played the leader for a group of Polish construction workers, none of whom speak English. That lack of understanding affects their personal and contractual relationships. Clearly Skolimowski's multilingual experience in the making of Deep End contributed to the texture of Moonlighting.

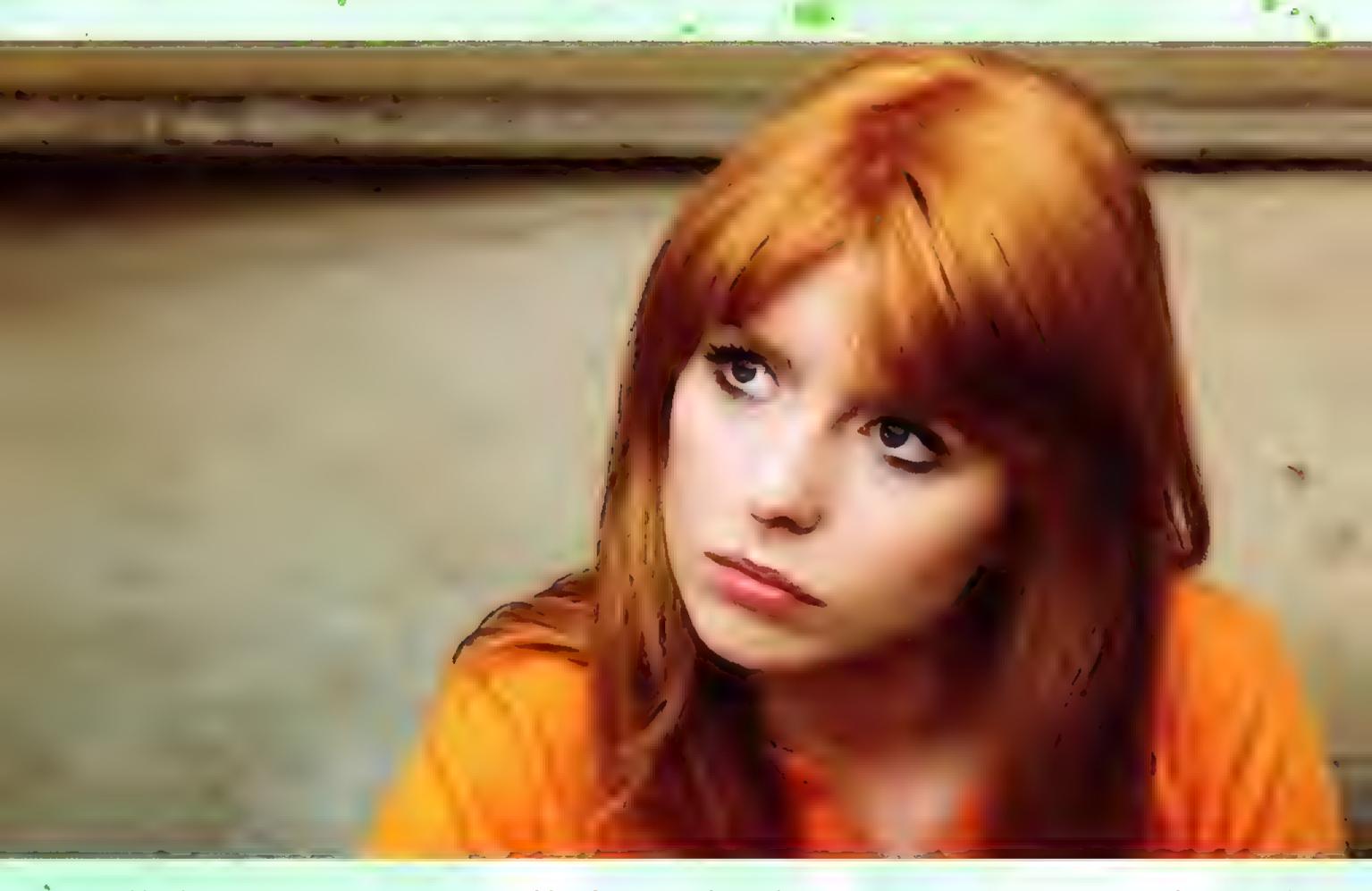
The language problem in Moonlighting is yet another manifestation of the ambiguity that permeates Skolimowski's work. After taking a 17-year break from filmmaking, Skolimowski made Four Nights with Anna, where he returns to obsessive behavior, a story which is told

ERZY SKOŁIMOWSKI
FOUR NIGHTS
WITH

with multiple layers of ambiguity. At the center of this film is an inarticulate man probably somewhat mentally retarded who lives with his dying grandmother on the grounds of a country hospital which has resident nurses. The nurses dorms are right across the field from the grandmother's house, and the grandson spends hours staring at the nurses in their windows, particularly at Anna, a voluptuous blonde nurse somewhere in her thirties. When his grandmother dies, he devises a scheme to get into Anna's room. When she's gone from her room, he climbs through her window, familiarizes himself with the objects in her room and puts a sleep-inducing substance into the glass she drinks milk from before she goes to bed. When her light goes out, he crosses the field, climbs through the window, straightens some things out in the room, and goes to sleep on the rug next to her bed. Each night he gets a little bolder, fixing her clock, doing the dishes; and part of the suspense lies in our wanting to know whether she will suddenly wake up and discover him. That never happens. But there is another issue: She has been raped, and the groundskeeper is suspected. There is a trial. Skolimowski films the rape scene in a way that we don't know whether the groundskeeper is the rapist or a witness, and it is never resolved To add to this, there is the surrealist touch early in the film in the image of a dead cow floating in the river. Both the subject

matter and the way it is handled produce a result that is as unsettling to the audience as anything that goes on in *Deep End*.

Ambiguity is at the core of understanding any Skolimowski film, and certainly it's true of Deep End It first manifests itself in the use of color, as is appropriate for a man who was and is a painter. In the opening shot, we follow the path of a drop of bright red, either paint or blood. We don't know which. Color, especially bright colors, play a role throughout the film, which is surprising for a film which is so dark. Skolimowski makes excellent use of the bright colors that are being used to refurbish the drab interiors and exteriors of the bathhouse, and the splashes of bright red and blue paint that get splattered on the walls of the swimming pool in the aftermath of the swinging lamps that kill Susan. It's there in the yellow of Susan's slicker, but of course the dominant color is red. There is the red of Jane Asher's hair (Her red hair is so significant that when I asked her in a recent interview whether she had the same red hair she had in the film, she responded, "Yes, but it's not the same color you remember." There is the red of the Irish setter whom in her own manner she enfices and rejects. There's the red of her fiance's car and the red markings of Mike's bicycle, which is emblematic of the sexual rivalry and, of course, the closing scene of the film where a dead and naked Susan is adrift in the pool colored by her

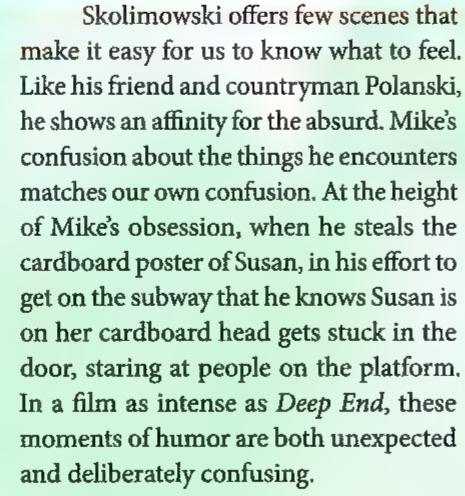


own blood.

A surprising element in this film is its unexpected humor, which contributes to the unsettling quality of watching the film. It begins right away with the Mike's job interview with the owner of the bathhouse. Of course, there is lightness and humor in the scenes of playful banter between Susan and Mike, including the scene where she takes the pregnant man poster and puts it on Mike. Mike's awkwardness in discovering he's in a sexually fraught situation is often a source of humor and is foreshadowed in the interview. There are other funny moments, such as when the obsessed Mike pursues Susan

and her fiancé into the seedy nightclub alarming and even grotesque.

section of London, Mike, who at his age and without money can't get into the clubs, decides to buy a hotdog instead (phallic substitutions abound in the film.) He encounters a hotdog vendor, (played by Bert Kwouk of Pink Panther fame.) Their pas-de-deux is truly funny. And early in the film what does one make of Mike's first sexual encounter with the middleaged Diana Dors, a former cinema sex queen who was once thought of as the British Marilyn Monroe or Jayne Mansfield but had become its Shelley Winters? The scene starts off comically but becomes



In my interview with Jane Asher about her role, I asked her whether that was her posing seminude in the cardboard standup. She said that indeed it was, but she did not think her character was meant to be a stripper. Nevertheless, that possibility makes Mike more frustrated which becomes more so when his probing question about her prompts her to respond, "I'm too expensive for you." These uncertainties contribute to the overall sense of unease that the film creates. It's soon apparent that it is too easy to say that Deep End starts off as a



light coming-of-age film that gets progressively darker. There is much more to this film than that.

The core of this ambiguity rests with the character of Susan. Is she a devoted fiancé, a manipulative mistress, a responsible bathhouse manager, an irresponsible tease, a stripper, a prostitute or all of the above? All of these seeming contradictions are contained within the remarkable performance of Jane Asher. Twenty-three years old at the time she made the film, she had already established credentials as an actress. Identified with the swinging-London atmosphere of the late sixties and early seventies, she had been the girlfriend of Paul McCartney (the relationship ended in 1968.) She is the daughter of a doctor and a music teacher - her mother taught McCartney how to play the oboe. She was in the same category as Twiggy, Jane Birkin and Susannah York, with whom she appeared in Loss of Innocence. Early on in her acting career, she was in Roger Corman's Masque



of the Red Death and Lewis Gilbert's Alfie, with Michael Caine. After Deep End, she went on to do film, television and stage. Her most recent film was Death at a Funeral, and she will be appearing on the London Stage in much lighter material than Deep End, in plays by the Victorian playwright Oscar Wilde and the Edwardian Harley Granville-Barker. Curiously, however, she achieved her greatest success as a cake decorator. Nonetheless, she has left behind an indelible portrait of a complex and contradictory character, one by whom every member of the audience is both shocked and saddened when she dies.





Knowing her career path, her performance in Deep End is all the more remarkable. One of the emblematic scenes is when she is in the park wearing her yellow slicker. She entices an Irish setter to come to her (the dog is red, of course), only to rebuff it and abruptly send it away. When Mike brings his parents to the bathhouse in the hopes of their getting special treatment, Susan coldly says no on the pretext of her seeing her fiancé. When his parents leave, Susan steps out of her office, never having left at all. When Mike follows Susan and her fiancé to the porn cinema and sits behind her, he harasses her in the manner of boys in a Truffaut film and ultimately fondles her breast. She expresses outrage; her lover goes to complain. When he leaves, she turns around and gives Mike an affectionate kiss. She leaves without pressing charges against Mike. Her character is aware of the sexual tension between the younger man and her older lovers; it manifests itself in the vehicles each drives, the lover with his red car and Mike with his red markings on his bicycle. But when Mike in pursuit of the lovers annoys them, Susan gets behind

the wheel and runs over Mike's bicycle, thereby destroying it. At the end, when Mike has found the engagement ring, he puts it on his tongue, thereby enticing her. She gets the ring, walks off, but walks back and disrobes. Is it an act of seduction or gratitude? As we know, Mike can't perform sexually.

Even though Deep End made a significant impact on the few of us who saw it in the early seventies, it is certainly due for rediscovery, as is, in fact, the entire work of Jerzy Skolimowski, one of the world's most underappreciated filmmakers. Auteur critic Andrew Sarris once described Skolimowski's work as "The best of Godard, Truffaut and Polanski and then some"; yet his work is unavailable in the US. But with a major retrospective this year in Paris and a smaller one in Boston last summer, maybe the work of this great and idiosyncratic filmmaker will finally get seen. So important is Deep End when it showed in Paris on July 13, two separate monographs appeared, one in French and the other in English. In short, Deep End is a minor masterpiece, and it is about to be rediscovered through

its new Blu-ray release. People will be as shocked today as they were in 1970. They will discover that it is not just a shocker, but a complex, multilayered psychological thriller from a truly visionary filmmaker.

by DAVID KLEILER





David Kleiler is a veteran of over 30 years in the independent film industry. He is the co-founder of the Boston Underground Film Festival, Artistic Director of the Woods Hole Film Festival,

Chairman of the Board & Chief Advisor to the Northampton Film Festival, creatively involved with the New Haven and Nantucket Film Festivals and receives a credit for the Journey into Madness Program at the Toronto Film Festival. He is a former tenured professor of Communications at Babson College, and has also taught film at Emerson College, U Mass Boston, Tufts University and the Boston Architectural Center.

Stone Cold Granny



Janne Karlsson

From BFI VIDEO

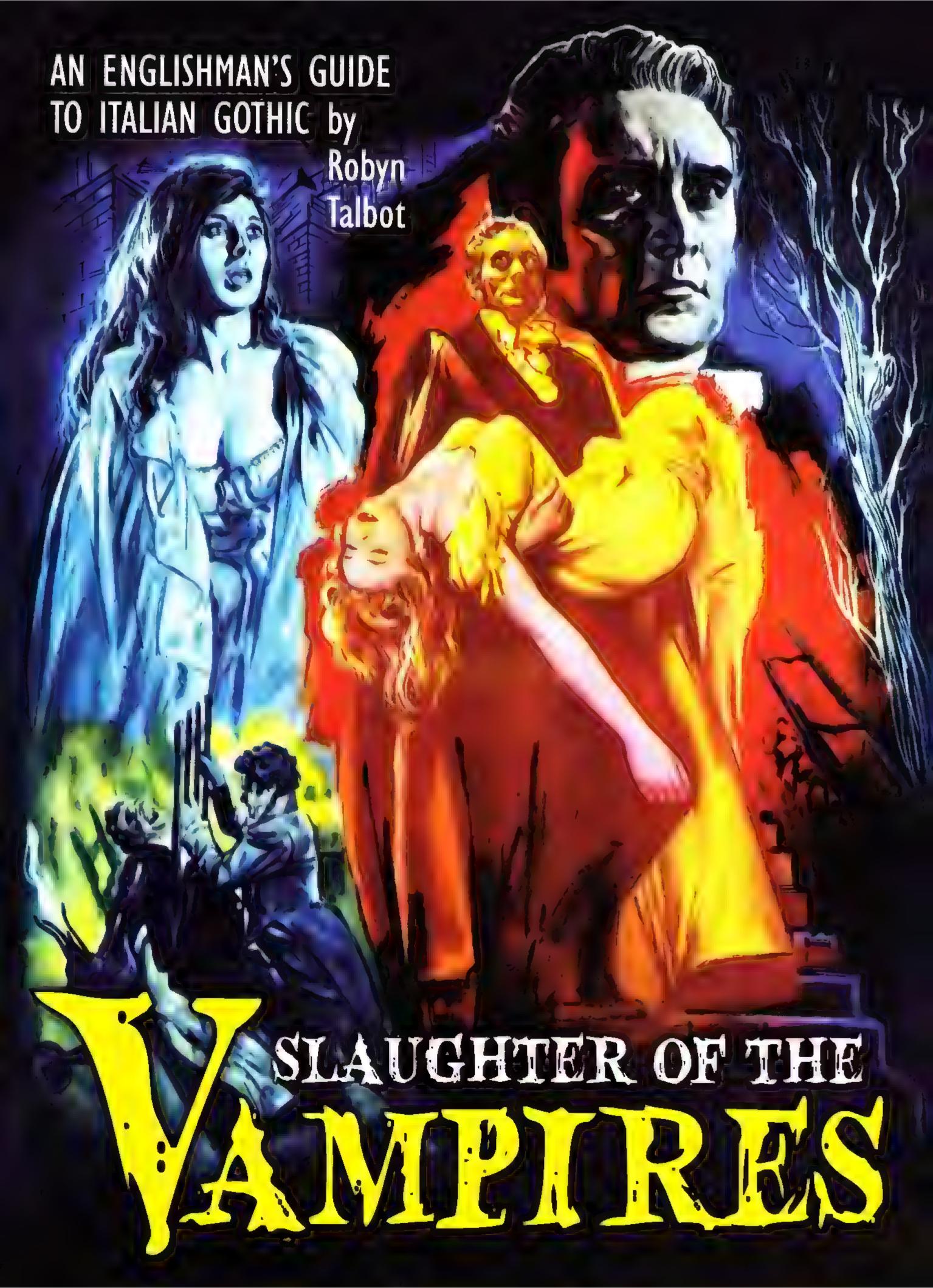
A film by Jerzy Skolimowski
Format: Blu-ray/DVD - Dolby, PAL, Widescreen
Run Time: 88 minutes

With a New High Definition Restoration

Extras

- Presented in both High and Standard Definition
- Starting Out: The Making of Jerzy Skolimowski's Deep End (2011, 74 minutes): a comprehensive new feature-length documentary
- Deep End: The Deleted Scenes (2011, 12 minutes):
- Original theatrical trailer
- Careless Love (Francine Winham, 1976, 10 minutes): rare and disturbing tale in which a woman (Jane Asher) takes drastic action to keep the affections of the man she loves
- Illustrated booklet featuring new essays by David Thompson, Yvonne Tasker, and Ewa Mazierska





THE LOVER IN THE WINE CELLAR

Whilst themselves influenced both in terms of style and content by the recent Gothic horror pictures of Hammer and the earlier classics from Universal, the game-changers from Mario Bava and Riccardo Freda are also marked by their fierce originality, setting the template for many Italian horrors to come. Bava's sensuous resurrected witch in Black Sunday (1960) and Freda's demented necrophiliac surgeon in The Horrible Dr. Hichcock (1962) both may have had their antecedents across world cinema, but never had audiences seen such misdeeds related in quite such a passionate and mischievously transgressive fashion.

HE WAKE OF Bava's international success saw many Italian producers and directors seeking to score similarly sizeable hits within the newly resurgent genre.

Of course, not all of these had the same painstakingly honed talent and eye for detail of those two master craftsmen and while some of their films are now seen as high watermarks of the genre and

period, there are many others whose efforts few will ever hold in anything like such high regard. Roughly around the same time that Freda was rushing his flawed masterpiece, writer and director Roberto Mauri followed the lead of Piero Regnoli's L'ultima preda del vampiro / The Playgirls and the Vampire and Renato Polselli's L'amante del vampiro / The Vampire and the Ballerina (both 1960) with a little vampire film of his own, La strage dei vampiri / Slaughter of the Vampires

(1962)— which is a rather odd title (preceded by 'The' on screen) considering the relative lack of 'slaughtering' of or at the hands of the small number of nosferatu involved. While Mauri's film clearly falls into the loose category of 'also-ran' in relation to the films examined in this series of articles thus far, it is nevertheless not without its own dubious charms and points of interest.

In the film's opening shot, the camera lingers momentarily on a cross casting its shadow on a dry stone wall before panning around to reveal a road on which

two figures run up a hill towards us,

closely pursued by an angry mob of torch-wielding villagers. Represented in glorious monochrome, with the male of the pair resplendent in full Bela Lugosi Dracula drag and the female in billowing shroud-like nightgown, we're immediately transported into the closing reel of a Universal creature feature.

It seems an odd choice to begin a horror story by presenting your monsters as the hunted rather than the hunt-

I come from the past. I exist in the present and in the future. I am here to offer you a life of passion for centuries everlasting. A realm which is waiting for you. A beautiful world of strange colours—colours which as yet you cannot even imagine, but which I will teach you to see. They are hidden in the darkness of our realm.

Dieter Eppler as 'Vampire'

ers, and perhaps even odder to use audience identification techniques such as having the viewer hide with the vampires in the undergrowth as the villagers mill about and explain through their shouted dialogue that "the deaths of those girls must be avenged tonight." As they "make a break for it" as Female Vampire puts it in the American dub, she falls and the male scarcely looks back as he leaves his bride to her fate, bolting away to save his own undead skin. From her point of view on the ground we see the villagers immediately descend upon her, prodding her

with pitchforks, their faces contorted with zealous glee—further encouraging identification with the vampire.

Ater the opening credits it quickly becomes clear that, far from ploughing a new furrow in vampire lore, Mauri's film is in fact another retelling of the *Dracula* story with a few minor, but at times salient, alterations. (We never see those villagers again, by the way.) The nameless 'Vampire' of the film is played by the late Dieter Eppler, a popular actor in the

contemporaneous West German Krimi films based on the work of Edgar Wallace (or in some cases his son, Brian) who would enjoy a busy acting career right up until his retirement in 2001.

Eppler's vampire, as suggested, is in the traditional Hollywood mode, already of course incredibly clichéd by this time, cutting a fine figure in tux, cape, slicked back hair and an inordinate amount of rouge and mascara. While he lacks the sheer physical presence of a

Christopher Lee he is still compelling to watch—rather comical at times, yes, but compelling nonetheless. It's hard to put one's finger on exactly why this is. Perhaps it's the intense glare that he manages to sustain for most of the film or maybe it's just his very Germanic appearance, augmented by the layers of slap, lending him strange kind of vampiric authenticity.

After eluding the vengeful villagers, the Vampire goes to ground in the wine cellar of the impressive castle of local lord of the manor Wolfgang (Walter Brandi) and first presents himself at the latter's

Diabolique Issue 7



wedding reception. Prior to his grand entrance, we are introduced to Wolfgang and his new bride, Louise (the stunning Graziella Granata), in a rather sumptuous if slightly over-lit castle interior set, brimming with lavishly costumed extras. Just like Magaretha in Dr Hichcock, Louise entertains her guests by playing a romantic melody on the piano-actually the film's slightly overused main theme by the then-prolific Aldo Piga. "A composition worthy of a great master," one of the guests remarks although surely nobody in their right mind would go quite that far. As she plays, she is suddenly distracted by-well, the viewer can't be completely sure what it is, but whatever it is is represented by an hilarious 'spooky' theremin noise on the soundtrack, which

Louise shudders in response to, although it seems nobody else can hear it. To be frank, the only response one could reasonably have to this would be fall about laughing but Louise finds herself 'a bit dizzy' after her performance is ended.

Of course, this 'strange feeling' heralds the arrival of the Vampire, who when she looks around is framed in the doorway, gate-crashing unchallenged despite his otherworldly appearance. He zeroes in on Louise immediately, bagging the first dance and mesmerizing her with his intense visage, much to the delight of the resident gossips. Left 'weak at the knees' after this, Louise retires to her bedchamber and no sooner has Wolfgang given her a chaste kiss goodnight than the Vampire appears there, sweeping her up in his

arms and laying her on the bed.

It must be said that the vampire seduction scenes are surprisingly steamy for the time the film was made, certainly more so than Hammer's films of the same period, although the British studio would make up for this later. Where the sexual frisson of the bedchamber vampire visitation is largely implied in Terence Fisher's more famous films, here it's made blatant with Eppler kissing Louise's neck and breasts and Louise groaning and writhing more orgasmically than any young vampire victim had a business to in 1962. Once Louise is well and truly in his thrall, the vampire wastes no time in moving on to housekeeper Corinne (Edda Ferronao), a similarly voluptuous brunette, and the same erotic scene is played out with

58 Diabolique Issue 7





her. When Louise has first been visited, but not yet turned, she lolls around the next day with the dreamy, satisfied look of someone who has experienced incredible sex for the very first time—and, indeed, the night before being she and Wolfgang's wedding night, for all intents and pur-

poses, she is. It's the couple's first day of married life, but Wolfgang's burblings fail to hold her attention for a second now the realisation that there's more to life than she ever imagined has dawned. An awakening in more ways than one. And, frankly, Wolfgang is a bit of a bore—but

more on that in a minute.

As for the Vampire, there's no 'Count Dracula's Great Love going on here. Unlike, say, Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula, with whom we are made to feel an affinity with, despite his dastardly deeds, because of the undeniable depth and sincerity of his 'undying' love for Elisabeta / Mina Harker, this nameless vampire just seems to want a piece of any attractive and ample-bosomed young female that comes into his orbit. Dialogue like "Your mirror cannot show you, it only diminishes you; it cannot possibility do you justice. The reflection you see there bears no resemblance to the reality. Ah, could you but see yourself as you are in my heart. (to Louise) and "I can feel your breathing when you're sleeping, when you awaken I can feel the blood throbbing through your veins" (to Corinne) reveal this vampire as not so much the great romantic as a bit of a shark with a nice line in pillow talk. Of course the vampire is ever the ultimate sexual predator, and this one seems to enjoy the process of 'courting' above all else, losing interest once he's acquired his



bride. As we see this played out with Louise and started again when he has Corinne letting down her Princess Leia braids, we guess that such was also the case with the 'bride' seen in the opening scene—who he was incredibly quick to ditch when crunch time came around.

However, even though this loses the vampire much of the pathos inherent in Stoker's character, and the audience's sympathy (that the film played with in the opening sequence) with it, this doesn't mean that we can't understand the attraction, especially when the Vampire is compared with the competition. The character of Wolfgang, played by Walter Brandi (who had also appeared in *Ballerina* and *Playgirls*—as a vampire) is roughly analogous with Michael Gough's Arthur Hol-

as such doesn't get to do a lot of romancing, mesmerising or inspiring awe. In most cinematic adaptations of Stoker's tale the cuckolded' husband figure appears as something of a drip next to the exotic and alluring vampire, and this is most certainly the case here. And it doesn't help that at a couple of points we see him sitting around in flouncy nightclothes that resemble nothing so much as a Pierrot costume.

Of course, it's no good having an Arthur Holmwood without a Van Helsing, and he we have in the personage of Dr. Nietzsche(!), as played by Luigi Batzella under his 'Paolo

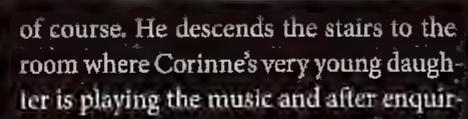
Solvay pseudonym. His confident demeanour and control of the situation serve to further emasculate Wolfgang, and it is he that ultimately 'penetrates' Louise with the fatal stake. One wonders if 'Dr Freud' might have been more appropriate and useful doctor for this particular film. In a deviation from the Dracula template, Wolfgang himself is bitten, first by Louise, then by the vampire's subsequent conquest, Corinne. In the first instance, a quick blood transfusion, thanks to

Neitzsche, keeps vampirism at bay, but sees him virtually bed ridden from then on (and hence given license to wear those

damn pyjamas), making him easy prey for his now undead housekeeper. With this in mind, it's not hard to see that Wolfgang

> has been put into a more traditionally female type of role, making the Vampire well and truly the alpha male of the narrative, with Nietzsche a close second.

Things take a distinct turn for the odd and vaguely troubling with the Wolfgang character in the last reel. Still recling from his double penetration, he rises from his bed with a trance-like but determined expression when he hears a piano play a haunting tune—the title suite again,



ing after her parents says to her, "I feel like walking for a while in the garden. Will you go out with me?" Adding that, "I can show you some wonderful new hiding places." And so they walk the castle grounds at night, until, spotted by Nietzsche and Wolfgang's faithful retainer (Corrine's husband and the girl's father, played by Alfredo Rizzo), Wolfgang snatches her up in his arms and races towards the family crypt. (While this is going on our main Vampire just seems to be scurrying around aim-

lessly.)

Wolfgang proceeds to lock himself and the little girl into a section of the crypt, and, hot on their tails, Neitzche and the manservant immediately start hammering on the door. "Don't be afraid, it's quite safe," Wolfgang reassures the girl. He is suddenly startled by the appearance of the Vampire and leaps to battle with him to defend the girl—either because seeing the Vampire has brought him back to his senses or because he is defending his prey from a rival. As he manages to slay his enemy, it seems the vampire curse is lifted, so whatever might have happened with the girl is deferred. Throughout the film we have been shown the vampires urges as being of a predominately sexual nature, first with Vampire's seductions





of Louise and Corinne, later with each woman's violation of Wolfgang, and now we're shown that when Wolfgang is infected his first port of call is a girl of no more than seven. What is this supposed to tell us about Wolfgang? Whatever it is, it isn't elaborated on any further.

Likely, it was simply convenient for the mechanics of the story to have the little girl in jeopardy at the end. The heavy suggestion of paedophilia does add to the horror of the situation, but it's unlikely that Mauri considered it of particular significance any more than the fact that the only person that Wolfgang gets to penetrate in the narrative is his love rival, the Vampire. As with many Gothic horror man-monsters of the sixties, Eppler's Vampire seems a little too easily destroyed, impaled on an iron railing after a furly short struggle. What follows is the one of the poorest attempts at recreating the 1958 Dracula's disintegration climax ever seen; done in what looks like three takes, with not one remotely matching up with the last. However, unlike most

> of Hammer's films, at least Slaughter has the decency to offer a short coda instead of ending abruptly the very instant that the monster

The film is by and large verted to Slaughter nice to look at, with some exquisitely photographed location work at Monte San Giovanni Campano Castle and its grounds in the Frosinone province of the Lazio region of Italy The location would also later be used by 'Dr Nietzsche' himself. Luigi Batzella, when their point, directing the mad-asa-box-of-frogs Nuda per Satana / Nude for Satan (1974). However, while frequent Batzella collaborator Ugo Brunelli's cinematography is fantastic in the exterior shots, the setand stagey from overlight-

pared with those of the Bava and Freda films. Perhaps it is an unfair comparison to make, but one that comes directly to mind when watching. Mauri and Brunelli's use of shadow is impressive at several points but their work is generally uneven. for example, one scene where Wolfgang and Nietzsche are talking for some reason seems to have a Vaseline-smeared lens for one shot, but not for the next.

On the whole Slaughter is a reasonably good, if muddled and occasionally unintentionally amusing, old-fashioned horror movie, which suffers in export prints from injudicious pruning and terrible dubbing. Mauri's film didn't see a US release until 1969 when it became Curse of the Blood Ghouls and, one suspects, terribly dated considering this was the same year that films like Night of the Living Dead and 2001: A Space Odyssey were being released. The entertaining US trailer tells us that, "In the dark of night they leave their tombs to satisfy their needs for blood-because these demons of the undead can exist only by ravishing the living!" with subsequent on-screen captions reading "Fang-mark of the Vampire" Branding Them... Horror Slaves of Satan." Now who could resist that? For the film's second life on American TV, the title re-

Like many of the less celebrated Ital ian Gothics it amounts to a pleasing diversion, a dreamlike transmission from an age that never truly existed. Whilst the film is generally popular with committed fans of the genre, most would no doubt concur with online critic Glen Erickson's dismissal of it as "a generally uninspiring and generic vampire tale with liberal script borrowings from Hammer's Horror of Dracula." And, well, one can see

Part of the pleasure of films like Slaughter lies in the way they wear their cliched iconography on their sleeves-they're not at all ashamed to replicate something that's been seen before, as long as they can keep their audience entertained and, occasionally, create something beautiful. Mauri's film sucbased interiors appear flat ceeds in this at least some of the time.

The following year, 1963, would see a ing, especially when com- further proliferation of Italianate Gothic



nightmares, including the maestro Mario Bava's return to the cycle he had initiated, with I tre volti della paura—better known to us as Black Sabbath. And this time he would have a legend of old-time Gothic cinema along for the ride.

by ROBYN TALBOT

Dedicated to Dieter Eppler (1927-2008)



Writer and genre film enthusiast Rob Talbot is a regular contributor to 'superblog' 'Italian Film Review' and UK horror magazine Scream. He maintains his own blog, 'Mondo Euro.' He holds a first class degree in English Literature.

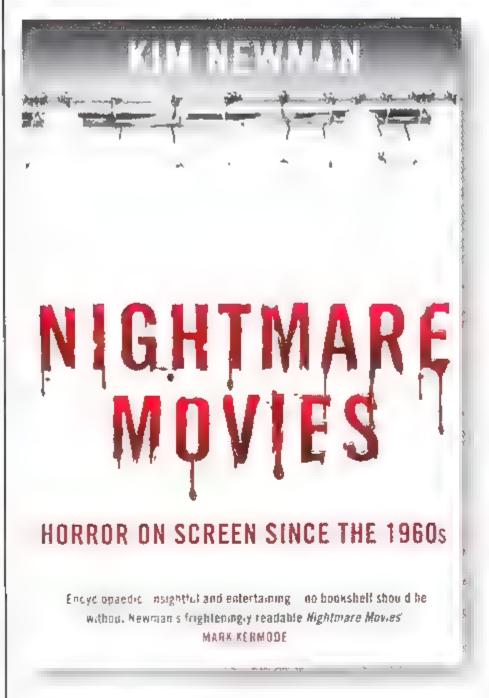


RIGHTMARE MOVIES

A BOOK BY KIM NEWMAN

Published: Bloomsbury, April 2011

PAGES: 633 RRP: £30.00



people who cause you to do a double-take if you walk past him in the street. With his long hair, waxed moustache, wide-brimmed hat, waistcoat and gentleman's cape you feel there's a possibility you've just been through a temporary rip in the spacetime continuum. If you added a top hat to the ensemble it would be like you had just had a brush by from Jack the Ripper.

Along with being a poster boy for the Steampunk movement, Newman has also managed to become Britain's foremost authority on horror films and gothic horror fiction. He not only writes about films but has also created an alternative Victorian London in a series of novels, where Dracula rules and dissenters face public impaling. One can imagine that Newman takes the opportunity to put his characters through the kind of torture he would like to inflict on the directors of the strategy-to-video fodder he reviews

for "Kim Newman's Video Dungeon", his monthly column in *Empire* Magazine.

The original version of Nightmare Movies was first published in 1988 and was Newman's attempt to bridge the gap he felt existed in current film criticism. As he is fond of relating, all of those type of books finished their discussion around the mid 1960s and tended to state that the current crop of horror films were not as good as the golden age of Universal and RKO. Whilst he does not disagree that those are fine films, he felt that then more recent films also deserved proper appraisal. It was from this gap in the market that Nightmare Movies was born. It quickly became an essential resource for film fans, students and academics and demonstrated that Friday the 13th, Nightmare on Elm Street and their lesserknown cousins had equal merit with the classic period.

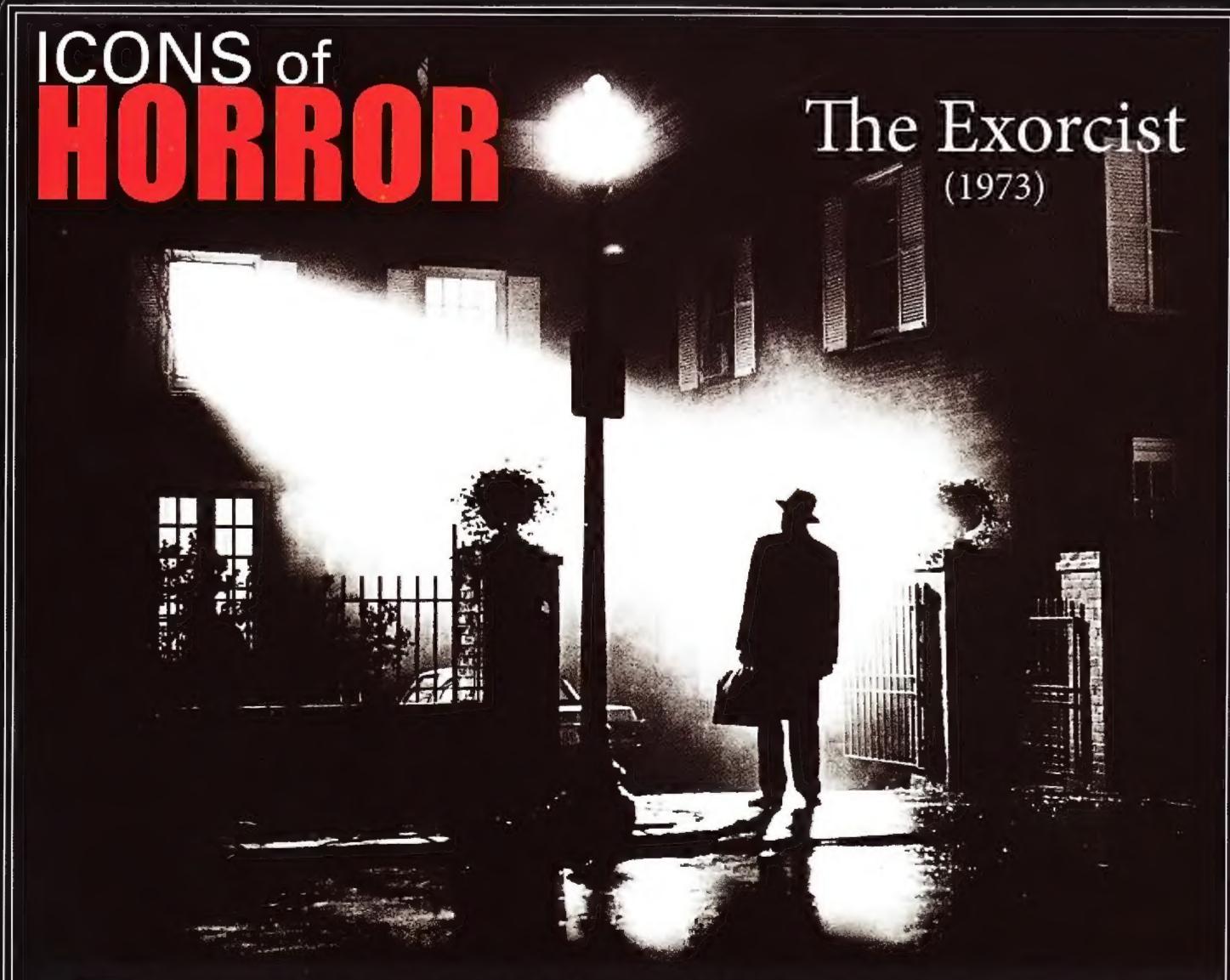
Newman has now revisited the book and brought it right up to date. It is now an invaluable volume covering 1968 (Night of the Living Dead) to the present day. The original text is present, complete with annotations detailing what the older, wiser Newman now thinks of his younger impetuous self, along with eight further chapters. The new section includes work on the resurgent vampire films, the so-called Torture Porn movement and J-Horror, alongside additions to his auteur list, now including Tim Burton, Larry Fessenden, Guillermo del Toro and David Lynch. Whilst one may initially question the inclusion of Lynch, it is worth noting that the book is called NIGHTMARE Movies, not Horror Movies, and Lynch's films certainly qualify that distinction.

The only real complaint that can be directed towards this new edition is the fact that all of the pictures included have

been published in black and white. For such a full-blooded genre, colour reproduction would have served the reader far better.

The history of this genre is filled with visionaries, hacks and mischief makers. Just when one believes the boundaries of taste and acceptability have been pushed to their limits, you are forced to think again. From Freaks in 1932 to the current furore around A Serbian Film and The Human Centipede II (Full Sequence), the only certainty we have is that we never know what is just around the corner. This is one of the things that makes the genre so exciting and Newman points out that unlike his predecessors he is not saying that his book now covers the new golden era, and that films today are not as good and those we saw in the 1970's and 1980's. As the genre and public tastes evolve it is not the role of the critic to point out that they are wrong and Newman is clear that he can keep his personal tastes separate from his own written assessments. What he achieves in this book is a clear narrative thread throughout the forty years covered. He demonstrates what the changing tastes and themes were and where they came from, and he identifies references, homages and rip-offs. As anyone who has sat through his "Kim Newman's Bastard-Hard Quiz" can testify, his film knowledge is vast and encyclopaedic. He is the go-to guy for radio shows and documentaries that need a genre expert (particularly if Mark Gatiss is unavailable), but he never appears to be smug or dismissive. Deep down Newman is just a film fan and he has managed to forge a career for himself out of that. We are all the better off for it.

by ADRIAN SMITH



a haze reminiscent of a London fog, broken only by the yellow light of a street lamp, and the clearly defined silhouette of a man with a hat and a Gladstone bag. A second glance and you see it isn't the street lamp that highlights the figure, but a block of pure light streaming from an upstairs window. Echoes perhaps of illuminated manuscripts of the medieval period.

The almost monochromatic image that adorns the posters for William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* has become one of the most striking in the annals of horror. A two hour picture summarised in one brief moment of screen time.

It won't surprise the art historians amongst you that the poster art and the image make full use of the golden ratio—and no doubt this formula is a sig-

nificant part of the reason why the image works aesthetically. The lamppost defines the middle of the frame, splitting it into two halves. While our eyes initially may be drawn to the open window in the upper left corner, we are quickly drawn to the silhouette of the man in the right half of the frame. He dominates.

Who is he? Is he a doctor—he has a bag after all? A Jack the Ripper wannabe? Is he like the shadow of Murnau's Nosferatu, a supernatural being about to destroy a family? Or is he like Jonathan Harker, about to set foot in Castle Dracula in the Terence Fisher's classic. We demand to know.

It is fitting he should dominate our thoughts, because this is his film—he is the titular exorcist.

A brilliant moment in the film, it conveys the anticipation before the ritual to be conducted, a meeting of good and evil, God and the Devil. As a representative of God, it is fitting that he is illuminated—he offers a ray of hope. And yet, the monochrome black and white (or black and yellow in some versions) strips the scene of the multi-layered emotion at the core of the film.

In this image we see nothing of Linda Blair's tortured child, no levitating beds or sacrilegious profanities. There is nothing exploitational or horrific in an image that is designed to promote a deeply horrific and fairly exploitational feature. This is the calm before the storm. Before the storm that would erupt on screen, and the storm of controversy wreaked in *The Exorcist's* wake.

The sequel would shift the emphasis onto the more sexually alluring image of Linda Blair's face. By *The Exorcist III*, well who cares, quite simply only the image for the original film has that magical staying power.

by ROBERT J.E. SIMPSON

How you can become a part of Diabolique and Horror Unlimited Letters

The editor welcomes correspondence from readers of Diabolique. Submissions for the letters page should be emailed to robert@horrorunlimited. com with 'Letters' in the subject line. All emails will be considered for publication, and may be edited.

Subscribers can also leave feedback via the comments function on the website, and via the new HorrorUnlimited online forum (see www.horrorunlimited.com for details)

Submissions

Diabolique welcomes unsolicited submissions for publication in the magazine and website. Diabolique promises to push our understanding of horror, and is particularly concerned with Gothic film and literature. We will consider submissions that expand our understanding of any aspect of horror, or that deal with seemingly well-worn subjects in a new and interesting way.

In the first instance we recommend you contact the editor with an outline of your proposal, and where appropriate an example of your writing. Full draft submissions are also welcome, and we will promptly acknowledge receipt and advise you whether we wish to take it forward.

Essays should be submitted via email in a Word or Rich Text Format attachment document. Unless previously agreed, your submissions should not have been published elsewhere—either online or in print. At the time of going to press (March 2011), *Diabolique* does not as a rule pay for articles. A submission to the magazine confirms your willingness to allow a 12 month exclusivity on any article from date of publication.

We at *Diabolique* take issues of plagiarism very seriously. By submitting you also confirm that the material is your own original work, and you indemnify *Diabolique* and Horror Unlimited, the editors and publishers from any loss or expense incurred in the event of legal action arising from any offence.

Whilst not an academic publication, Diabolique encourages scholarly practices and approaches to the genre, and as such all sources should be referenced using numbered endnotes. The editor believes in the principles of good historical research, not tabloid journalism! For fuller guidelines please examine the contents of this issue, or email the editor.

Feature articles should be around 3,000 words, though we will consider longer articles by prior arrangement. Shorter articles should be around 1500—2000 words. Reviews should be between 500 and 1000 words. Fiction submissions can be of any length, but submissions over 5000 words may need to be edited or serialised.

All submissions should be accompanied by a short paragraph about the author (see the magazine for examples), and a photograph should be supplied.

Diabolique reserves the right to edit

any submission to suit the needs of the magazine, including issues of presentation, style, and space. As a rule the authors will be consulted on any matters of alteration or addition, but in the event of a dispute the decision of the editors is final.

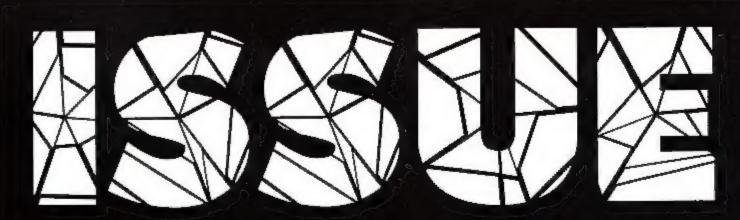
Illustrations

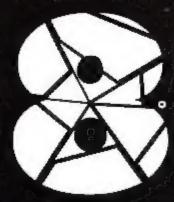
Authors are asked to provide photographs and/or illustrations for their work –including appropriate captions and references- or suggest where they may be obtained. The editors reserve the right to adapt, edit or commission artwork they feel would suit the presentation. Illustrative material should ideally be at 300dpi and sent as jpg or TIFF files.

Other Media

We are keen to see contributors explore the subject of horror through any means possible. Feel free to submit work in other formats, including illustrations, photography, video and anything else that takes your fancy. Work that cannot be published in the hard-copy magazine will be considered for publication on the Horror Unlimited website.

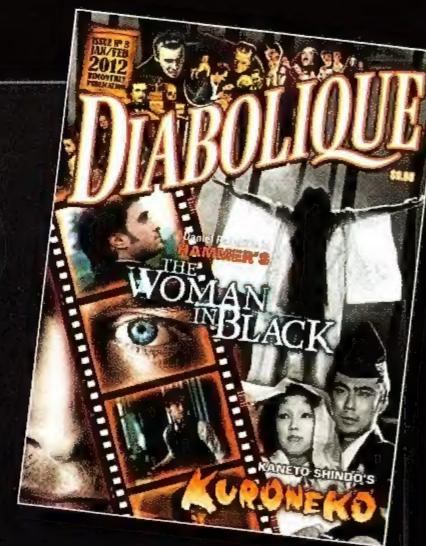
Please send all submissions and enquiries to the editor (Robert Simpson) at robert@horrorunlimited.com, with 'submission' in the subject line.





Jan/Feb 2012. Online and in selected stores

THE WOMAN IN BLACK. As Hammer horror goes back to its Victorian Gothic roots we will look at their new film starring Daniel Radcliffe, Susan Hill's original novel, the West End hit play adaptation, and Nigel Kneale's acclaimed television play. Kaneto Shindo's accalaimed 1968 horror KURONEKO is also put under the spotlight, plus all your usual favourites from the Diabolique team.





R e m

Like it? Buy it!!

